

THE PHOENIX SUIT By Arthur E. McFarlane

FEBRUARY, 1906

PRICE 10 CENTS

THE RED BOOK

MAGAZINE



Published Monthly by THE RED BOOK CORPORATION, 122-124 State St., Chicago

VOL. VI. No. 4

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NEW YORK CITY

THE RED BOOK

MAGAZINE

EDITED BY TRUMBULL WHITE

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COVER DESIGNED AND PAINTED BY GUSTAVUS C. WIDNEY

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THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE is issued between the fifteenth and twentieth of the month preceding its date, and is for sale by all newsdealers after that time. In the event of failure to obtain copies at news-stands or on railway trains, a notification to the Publishers will be appreciated.

Advertising forms close three weeks prior to the time of issue. Advertising rates on application.

THE RED BOOK CORPORATION, Publishers

158-164 STATE STREET, CHICAGO

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BOSTON OFFICES, 2 Beacon Street

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LONDON OFFICES, 10 Norfolk Street, Strand

Entered as second-class matter April 25, 1905, at the post office at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of Congress of March 3, 1879

LETTER FROM CHAS. T. SCHOEN

The Prominent Capitalist.

Philadelphia, October 18, 1905.

The Prudential Insurance Co. of America,
Newark, N. J.

Gentlemen: When I insured with your Company, in 1900, under a 5% Gold Bond policy for \$250,000, on the Whole Life FIVE YEAR DIVIDEND plan, paying an annual premium thereon of \$18,270, I did not give much thought to the dividend. A short time ago I received from you an official statement, advising that my policy was five years old, and that I had the choice of two options, as follows:

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Very truly yours,

CHAS. T. SCHOEN.

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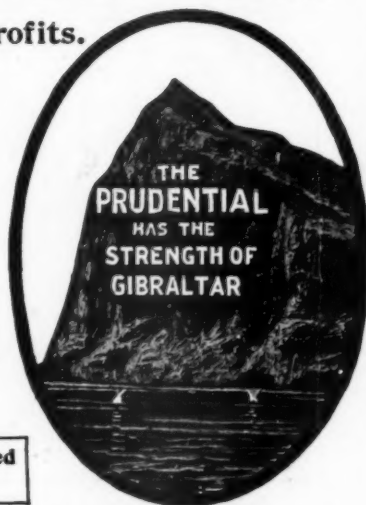
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MISS ADELE ARCHER















PHOTOGRAPH BY OTTO SARONY CO. NEW YORK

MISS BEULAH RADCLIFFE







MISS CHARLOTTE WALKER







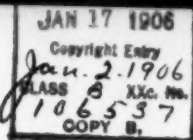




DRAWN BY F. DE FORREST SCHOOK

"As for me, I was just knocked into a gasp."

"The Phoenix Suit;" See page 449



THE RED BOOK

MAGAZINE

Vol. VI

February, 1906

No. 4

The Phoenix Suit

BY ARTHUR E. McFARLANE

There were some responsibilities which our ancient friend, the judge, could never entrust to us youngsters. It took him some time to jab and pry that fifty-pound back-log into place; but finally he arose from the work in triumph.

"Yes," he began again, "that was in 1857. I must have been about eighteen then, maybe half-past. And those clothes, whereof I am to tell you, were ready-made. I should say they were about the first of that cut to be sold in southern Ohio.

"They were the vestments bought me to go to law college in. Up to then I'd never worn anything that mother hadn't made. And, in a general way, it'd been promised me that I should start out in clothes from a sure-enough tailor's. But I knew dad was shaving himself up as well as down to let me go at all; and when I read that first announcement of the Phoenix Clothing Company in the *Courier*, and saw I could save near ten dollars by getting that new kind, it was of my own volunteering that I rode into Zanesville with the stage driver and got them. They were a cheviot cloth, and in color, a good, vigorous pepper-and-salt. And I didn't know whether to feel set up in them or not. They were at least half way to the tailor-store kind. More than that, they were certainly something new and unique. But, you know, sons, eighteen is a terrible conservative age, and I had some powerful serious doubts.

"I was going up to college, though; that was the big thing. I was leaving home for the first time, which gave me an

Adam's apple with harder corners to swallow than one of little Johnny's building blocks. And when once I'd got to Zanesville again, I started on my first ride in the cars, the new Ohio Railway from Baltimore, and that sure thrilled and up-lifted me. Nor I wasn't much scared, neither, not after the first half hour or so, anyway.

"As for clothes—now, sho', in a little while I had no more thoughts about clothes at all. I'd got into the future, and I was shooting and careering ahead faster even than that bullgine. Pretty soon I had old Daniel Webster in ec_pse, and Henry Clay a-following him. And the people out there in the fields and clearings, it was for me they were waving their hats and bandanas, for 'the Hon. James Jefferson Corning—our young Demosthenes of America—born in the small Ohio village of New Boston, and only a few short years ago a student in the University of that state'—. I guess I must have kept that up most of the afternoon.

"Anyway, when about five I got my first glimpse of the steeple of the new chapel of college town and a few minutes later was pushing out for the platform, I could already feel a deputation of the leading citizens and the Calithumpian band waiting in the street to meet me. And if I tried hard not to look what I know I was, my chin kept lifting up higher than my ears, and I was taking steps a foot longer than I'd ever taken before and then I hit the board walk outside, and was halted dead.

"Across the boarded-up windows of the

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latest station eating house to go into bankruptcy there was a sign—maybe four foot high and ten foot wide, and that sign read:

WELL, FRIEND, AREN'T YOU GLAD YOU
BOUGHT THAT PHOENIX SUIT?

"Sons, that stopped my breath. For awhile I couldn't do anything but just sort of keep backing away from it. But finally I pulled myself together somehow, and allowed I could maybe sneak my little carpet valise up town along the side ways without anybody spotting me.

"When I came out on the court house square, I backed up and tried to go round; there, planked up on the opera house was another sign. It was in poetry, and read:

ONCE I FELT AS SHY AS A COOT,
BUT NOW I'M WEARING A PHOENIX SUIT.

"I'd been told to go and inquire for my room and board at Mrs. Grimshaw's on the college road. Standing in the vacant lot at the corner was another red-and-blue stare-you-dead. It was in poetry, too, going something like this:

THE CYNOSURE OF ALL EYES? YOU BET
YOUR BOOTS!
FOR HE'S WEARING ONE OF OUR PHOE-
NIX SUITS.

"There is no doubt under heaven that I'd given Mrs. Grimshaw an alias if my brain machine had been in any condition to prepare me one. And even so, I had her certainly suspicious of me!

"But in the end she made out to let me have a room. And then she told me that a good many of the boys ate at a place opposite New Hall; but I could take my meals with her if I wanted. 'If I wanted!' Lordy, my soul just right-out clutched at that opportunity to keep indoors.

"Well, after some sleep, and a proper breakfast next morning, of course I felt considerably better. When I adventured myself inside the college gates, and got into the law line to register, my vitals did sure weaken. But nobody, for that day, seemed to be regarding me!

"Nor even by the afternoon of the day following had I become any 'cynosure of all eyes.' As, at last, I figured it out, the other lads most likely pitied me a lot too much to be caught looking my way at all.

But, in point of fact, day after day was

going by, and I wasn't making any friendships. And then, from always spying 'round to see if any one was regarding me, I got to spying 'round to see if I couldn't fix on someone else that was wearing a Phoenix suit. For if I could be right down sure of any such, it would be a powerful support to me. And, moreover, being so to speak soldiers in a common uniform of mortification, we ought to have a natural-born feeling for one another.

"To tell the truth, too, there were several that when they saw me looking their way, went a mighty rich tomato-color, which was strong evidence, *de facto*. Yet I never could be certain. But one day I was coming back from the post office when I met a lad there could be no doubting of for a Phoenix martyr in this tortured world. He, too, was wearing a pepper-and-salt cheviot, and our suits were cut for cut the same, pocket-flaps and collar-knicks, watch-fobs and button-holes. We each took just time to heave up one mutual and consuming blush of acknowledgement; then he made for the ridge and I for the river.

"He'd put north, and I'd put south. But shucks, that was no way for us to act, having the bond of sympathy we had. And both of us were well aware of that. And the next time we passed, we did better; we worked up our common knowledge of guilt into some sort of sick-lipped smile of recognition. The third time—we'd happened to come out of the chapel door together—we kind of sidled into each other and spoke. Sons, by the end of that week we were sharing the same room. Trickett, Arthur Trickett his name was. And for all he was Kentucky bred and I was clear Ohio, for all he was a 'med' and I was in law, there was soon a depth of friendship between us such as would have made old Damon and Pythias seem no better than a pair of Montagues and Capulets.

"Mind, we didn't open up by speaking about those Phoenix suits of ours. And, Lord, I began to believe, in time, that we never would get to speaking about them. But that we were wearing those clothes we never had any chance of forgetting. After lectures and on Saturday afternoons we used to strike off together on what you



DRAWN BY F. DE FORREST SCHOOK

"As a matter of course we fell in love with Miss Lavinia." See page 444

might call 'walking talks' down the river or back into the bush or up along the ridge; and pretty near every mortal direction we'd take, we'd find at least one of those signboards waiting to print its motto red hot all over us. The Phoenixers had covered that part of the country all right.

"And it was the kind of hateful familiarity in most of their greetings that more than anything else mounted the gall in us:

NEVER SEEM TO WEAR OUT, DO THEY?
THAT'S THE BEAUTY OF THE PHOENIX
SUIT.

"Or,—

HA! HA! GLAD YOU BOUGHT IT? WE
SAID YOU'D BE. NOW TELL YOUR
FRIENDS OF THAT PHOENIX SUIT!

"Or, in poetry.

YOU'RE FEELING GOOD FROM COLLAR
TO BOOTS?

THEN YOU'RE WEARING ONE OF OUR
PHOENIX SUITS!

"I reckoned I never would shake off the loathsome feeling of having the hand of the salesman still pawing on my shoulder, wherever I might try to dodge.

"And there is one of those signs that I wondered at little Trickett's being able to pass at all. For as I have told you his Christian name was Arthur, and he'd told me he'd always been called by the shortened form thereof. Well, I should say that there wasn't a high-way or by-way leading out of town that sooner or later wouldn't face you with a signboard painted:—

*
THERE IS ART IN A PHOENIX SUIT!

"And one afternoon, when old Jerry Scalpels, M. D. had been jabbing it into him in the 'butcher shop,' and so left him even tenderer in his feelings than circumstances had made him, sure enough on a tree at the entrance to McCauley's Grove was that same unqualifiable sign a-waiting him.

"By Judas priest,' he says, his jaw-knots working and his hands reaching out for the rocks almost without his starting them, 'You've got personal that way for the last time with me!'

"And for my part, I had my explosion right then, too. We turned in together, and finished distributing that kindling wood between us.

"However, we didn't really say anything till the morning following, when for the fifteenth time, maybe, we got our trousers mixed. Little Trickett, fiery-red for all it was the fifteenth time, gets into his right ones again, and then, sort of speaking into the corner, says, 'I bought mine in Lexington. Where did you buy yours?'

"Zanesville,' I managed to get out. Then shame overtook us again, and we touched no more on that matter, not in words at any rate.

"But thereafter, we never took a walk that we didn't include the destruction of at least one of these shouting defamations. And sometimes, when the field was clear, we got two or three of them.

"In the meantime little Trickett—I call him little, but that is only as I see him now; in girth and height there wasn't half an inch between us, and that you may keep in mind for later on—in the meantime little Trickett and I had ended the freshman

lonesomes for each other. And now, not merely on our tramps, but at nights when I'd shoved back my Blackstone and he'd made out to part with his femurs and clavicles, we'd start in on one of those five-mile-deep discussions wherein the natural male creature first begins to show his need of putting forth his inmost thoughts on heaven and earth, and the waters of philosophy under the earth.—'What was the real purpose of man here below?' 'For a thinking man could religion supply any adequate answer?' 'After all, wasn't the savage in Africa a mighty sight happier without any civilization?' 'And when you really looked at every side of life, weren't we all mere puppets in the hands of fate?'—Lord, Lord, just the same everlasting old bones, of course, and the same milk teeth just found them and fully prepared to chew 'em right up then and there! But I tell you we enjoyed those nights of talking, though, and the power of the arguments we put forward gave us a feeling of awe and respect for our intellects, that we'd never had before.

"In point of fact we had become a mighty sight heartened up together. And as for those Phoenix suits, I reckon we'd have succeeded in pretty completely sloughing them off, if not actually, then at any rate, spiritually, as you might put it. But just then something else came along. Towards the end of October we went out in company to our first social occasion. Together we were introduced to the first city girl we'd ever had a chance of knowing, Miss Lavinia Braddon. And with Miss Lavinia, as a matter of course, together we fell in love.

"Now there was something which according to the romancers should have put a wedge between us right away. But it didn't. Far from that. I'm merely telling you the facts now; for a considerable time it appeared to draw us only the closer in.

"The one difference it made was that now at nights we began to let our work go, to talk hours at a stretch about women—women in general, you understand. When we talked of women, and girls in particular, it was chiefly of Miss Lavinia's friends. And if we did speak of her, it was simply that she was there along with

the rest of them, or that she'd happened into the talk by accident, or that she seemed, in the most casual sort of way, to illustrate the point we were just then making. In my heart I believed that little Tricket was really harder hit than I was: more unbalanced, that is. I learned afterwards, he held exactly the same opinion regarding me.

"Of course for our age and generation there was no such thing as evening calls, or private visits of any sort. It was all a matter of the Saturday afternoon tea-fights and look-in's given in turn by the different professors' wives. Miss Lavinia was the niece of the Rev. Professor Braddon, (before we'd always called him Bulge-Eyed Braddon)—and at those affairs you could always be certain of finding her.

"And thereto little Trickett and I, giving up our Saturday tramps, began to go regular. We always went together, too. And Lord, our attitude towards each other was so full of tact, and discretion, and delicacy. With me, as I gave Trickett early to understand, I went along just sort of because he took me. And with him, well, shucks, he didn't really care to go of himself; but since I seemed to take pleasure in having him, he'd come along and welcome!

"And as for Simon-pure honor of conduct, sons, why there was more of that going between us than I have words to tell you of. At one of those receptions, once we'd located Miss Lavinia, if it was the turn of Number Two, Number One would suddenly get absent-minded and wander off through the crowd to the other side of the room; there he'd post himself against a what-not or a secretary, and stare into the far remote as if he'd just that moment been taken by some powerful tremendous thoughts. When they'd exhausted themselves, he'd go turn over one of the 'Garlands of Beauty and Virtue' books on the center table. And if he finally got to circulating around again, his eyes might glue themselves to a hundred different things in succession, but never would they take even the first regard in the direction of Number Two and Miss Lavinia. Then, after a-while Number Two would begin to look around sideways, and then commence to work himself out backwards; and that was

when Number One came in and had his stent.

"'Weren't there other girls to change to?' Gentlemen, we were both at the age when a growing youth can crowd more bashfulness into one half hour than the majority of women have experienced in their entire existences. And, I tell you, too, that the enamored man-boy in his shyness is most terrible constant! Miss Lavinia was the only girl we'd really reached the length of talking to, so far as we did do any talking at all, and to Miss Lavinia we stuck.

"But, sons, as for the lady in the case, it's mortal humiliating for me to have to own to it, but she didn't seem to be a whole lot enamored, on her part, with either of us. And even in the state we were in then, we had a kind of a generally unpleasant feeling to that effect. Only, while we shared all other things in common, that was a feeling which each of us kept to himself, in the private chamber of his spirit.

"I reckon in both of our souls, too, was the same deep-down belief that it was those Phoenix suits that were at the bottom of it. I've half intimated already that if we hadn't met up with Miss Lavinia the Phoenix blight might have lifted from us. But, you see, most every young man in love gets his ego-and-cosmos most powerfully tangled up with the habiliments containing the same. And it was fourteen times worse with us. Fifty rods from Professor Braddon's gate there was a sign that read:—

IF YOU WANT TO BE THOUGHT OF, BEGIN AT THE ROOT,
AND PAY FIFTEEN DOLLARS FOR A
PHOENIX SUIT.

"For my part, I never went to one of those tea-fights but what I felt Miss Lavinia reading Phoenix all over me.

"Yet it was from another direction that the trouble came. I knew when I arrived at college that Uncle John Harbottle had spoken for me with the law firm of King, Considine, King & King; and I knew that at any time I might be making my beginning with them, though for the fall term it would be for only an afternoon now and again. Well, it was just at that juncture that I got my first notice to appear.

Instead of being all joy and excitement over it, I was jolted right down. For the notice was for three o'clock on Saturday.

"I told little Trickett about it, and he said immediately that he'd stay away from that reception, too; it wouldn't be any pleasure at all to go alone.

"Then, of course, I said, 'No, I wouldn't hear of such nonsense. Go, you've got to!'"

"No, he wouldn't.

"Yes, but he would, too. No reason in the world for his staying away just because I happened to be tied up.

"No—no, he wouldn't, now!

"And so it went on right till after dinner Saturday. Then, under my persuasions, he sort of began to weaken. 'It wasn't that he wanted to go, but it would be lonely fooling around the whole afternoon without me; and, maybe after all, he might drop in for just a minute or two.'

"I told him that he was showing wisdom now; that was talking sense. And then I began to be sore about things in general right away!

"And five minutes on a stool at King & Considine's robbed the law business of any redeeming thrill it might have had for me.

"I found that my part of the practice was to rule red-ink lines in mortgage blanks, and to mint the monogram of the firm in spluts of sealing-wax. And I was kept at that till half-past six!

"Trickett didn't tell me anything about that tea-fight, and I didn't ask him anything. We were powerful friendly all that next week; you might say that we were particular to be friendly. But for my part I couldn't forget that I'd had thoughts, when coming home on Saturday, to the effect that maybe we two weren't quite so suited to each other as we believed we were. However, perhaps next Saturday afternoon would make everything all right again.

"It might have. But Friday night I got another note informing me that for the second time my reception would be at King & Considine's.

"Now, I confess that my arguments were just as strong that night and next morning as they had been the week before; but this time Trickett hadn't any right to give ear to them at all. Nor I didn't think he would, neither. He was as

strong, seemingly, as a stone wall, until just the minute I was departing. Then he suddenly remembered, dodging my eyes, that he'd told Miss Lavinia that I'd be around next time, sure; and perhaps he'd better see her just long enough to explain, so as she wouldn't think there was anything queer about it.

"I said of course he'd better, and I might have thought of that myself. Then I went off to K. & C.'s, feeling more soul-bittered and tragical than a hero out of Bryon.

"It was that afternoon while I was ruling up three pigeon-holes full of deed blanks, that it came over me for the first time that I'd never really had an even chance from the beginning. Trickett had a big advantage in conversation; there were things that would give you fits happening in the 'Butcher Shop' all the time; but, shucks, what was there in law to make talk about? More than that, his clothes, unless, maybe, you looked at them from behind, sat considerably better than mine did, too. And, mind you, there is lots of fellows that would think about those things!

"Young Considine broke in upon my meditations to tell me that he didn't think they'd need me again till the end of the month. But I saw well enough that that couldn't make any difference to me now.

"It's the unexpected that always happens. But sometimes the unexpected is exactly what was asked for. Monday morning I got a letter from Aunt Harbotle. It began, as usual, by asking me if I'd been reading my chapter every day, and see that I didn't forget my prayers, too. I'd find the use of them when it got on towards examinations; and were the other other young limbs of boys running on me? If they were, just let Mr. King know, and he'd find a way to stop it! And at the end of the letter there was a 'P. S.' saying that if I'd call in at the second Bank of Ohio I'd find a little something to get me a new suit of clothes with!

"She'd sent me fifty dollars. And for fifty dollars! Well, sons, clothes were clothes in those days, and when you were laying out to dazzle! Land of Liberty, there wasn't going to be any more agony in the Phoenix hair-shirt for me! I



DRAWN BY F. DE FORREST SCHOON.

"There was little Trickett stooping over the trunk." See page 449

studied the fashion plates all the way up from the bank. And I studied them on the other side of the street all the way down town again that afternoon. And when at last I had settled on what I was going to have, I began to be sorry for Trickett right there!

"I hadn't seemed to find it necessary to tell him about that fifty dollars. But, after ordering the clothes, I had to break it to him. And three days later the tailor's man brought them home to me rough-shaped for trying on.

"It wasn't that the fit was looked at in the way you look at it now. Tchck! That was a sartorial epoch when the more spare yards of broadcloth you could have hanging down over the backs of your hands and piling up on your ankle-knobs, the more honor you did yourself. It was the style that really counted. And those

new clothes of mine! Satin waist-coat, and velvet cuffs, and silk lining throughout, and a collar with enough turn-over to it to hide two men behind! Next Saturday afternoon the dean of the faculty was to give his reception, and I told that tailor's man that I'd have to have my things at latest by Saturday morning.

As for Trickett, I didn't have to look at his face to see that he knew well that now it was all day with him. To tell the truth, too, my conscience began to nip me across the chest, and take me tight around the neck, even if that new suit didn't.

"And through the days that followed I had to have a powerful lot of other things to study at to keep dodging the appeal in little Trickett's eyes. 'But Lordy,' I kept telling myself, 'I didn't go asking for those clothes; and now they've come, what else can I do but wear them?'

Yet, even so, to hold myself hardened up to it, I had to take a good long look at that Phoenix signboard on the corner, every time I passed it.

"Well, I might have spared myself all those regards. Saturday at nine I got my third notice from King & Considine's.

And I don't need to tell you that it was for the same afternoon. Trickett was out when it arrived, and I never told him I'd got it.

"A little after eleven my clothes came home. After I'd tried them on and made certain they were all right, the man spread them out on the bed, and they were sure magnificent. When Trickett came in, he took a look at them, and then he went out and walked around by himself till dinner-time. As for me, oh, of course there was nothing to hinder me putting them on and wearing them to K. & C.'s. A few score blotches of sealing-wax and candle-wax and red-ink would likely add to their looks a lot.

"Trickett hadn't anything to say when he came back, but he looked about driven-to-the-wall desperate. And I was smiling hard.

"But when, after dinner, I didn't make any motion to get into those new things, he seemed like he doubted his senses were playing tricks with him.

"'You ain't allowing to wear them to the dean's?' he asked.

"'No,' I said, 'I don't reckon I'll go to any reception to-day.'

"'Sho!' he said, 'Don't you get talking crazy! You come along to the dean's!'

"'No,' from me, 'I've about decided I'll go over to K. & C.'s. I reckon I can dig up something that'll suit me better over there.'

"'Sho, now, Jimmy, you can't tell me that!'

"'All right,' I said, 'maybe I can't. And maybe I don't deny that receptioning was all right for awhile. But after a time a man gets to feel the need of something to chew on. And for that give me the law.'

"Well, he looked most mighty doubtful about the state of my intellects. But the clothes were still lying there, and they had their own conviction.

"And, for the matter of that, as soon

as he had let his eyes rest on them again, he seemed to forget about me. He turned over the waist-coat in a hungry kind of way and spread out the coat-tails full breadth. 'But there ain't any thing to keep you from wearing these to King & Considine's, is there?'

"'Oh, no, not if I wanted to. But my old ones are a lot more comfortable. And if you ask me, I don't know as I feel about clothes now, the way maybe I once used to. People grow out of things after awhile.' With that staggerer I left him, and started for down-town.

"Anybody might have thought that K. & C.'s had called me in that day out of pure, old, grand-dad cussedness. There wasn't a thing for me to do but finish up some folding and addressing, work that any body that didn't know the A, B, C's of law could have done! That was a fine kind of business for me to be fooling away my afternoon at! And I'd made up my mind it was high time I wrote to father and Uncle John, and showed old King up a little, when he came out of the inside office and said I could go when I was finished.

"That let me out at a quarter to five. And there was just one thought in my head. If I went home on the double, and got into that new raiment a-flying, I might still win over to the dean's in time for the tail end of things. And for home I made, taking the back ways so that I could run.

"Fifteen minutes and I'd changed. Then I lit out for college, once more on the Prussian quick-step, which I only slackened so as not to get to the dean's with my tongue hanging out altogether,

"It was pretty late, and the crowd had thinned off a lot. But almost right away I caught sight of Miss Lavinia sitting in the library bay, along with a cluster of other girls. No less instantly did they spy me, too. And as soon as they did spy me, they took a second look, and then a third; and then, all save Miss Lavinia, they started for the outer room, clattering and tittering like a covey of blue birds.

"But I'd got far enough in my knowledge of their sex to feel that that sort of outbreak was only what you might call natural with them; and I didn't let it

trouble me too much. I made a head for Miss Lavinia, she watching me come. And shucks, she didn't fall a-tittering at all. She went a fierce, peony red, a red that got hotter every second. Oh, she hung out the danger signals all right, if I'd had the inward eyes to see them. But I started in, in my best learned-it-from-a-book vocabulary, to wish her all the compliments.

"'Mr. Corning,' she broke out, 'I—I—I won't listen to you. You can take them straight back to Mr. Trickett!'

"At that the tittering outside went up into a gale. As for me, I was just knocked into a gasp.

"'Oh, you needn't look,' she came at me again, 'I've let you two make a regular—regular jinny of me for long enough! And now you've gone a little too far. As if it hadn't been bad enough already, at every single reception, week in and week out, as if you were doing it on purpose, both of you! It's been just worse than being made up to by twins!'

The extent of my converse with her had at no time been right unlimited. It partook now of a pretty even mixture of gasps and swallows. And she'd only started.

"'Yes, for twins—twins are born that way and can't help it! But you two, always pepper-and-salts, pepper-and-salts! If it wasn't yours, it was Mr. Trickett's, till it just smarted my eyes to see you. As if you didn't know that every girl in town was calling me 'pepper-and-salts,' to say nothing of being mortified most to death in other ways! And now you have to crown it. When Mr. Trickett can't have been home ten minutes you must come marching back on me wearing his new clothes!'

"'His clothes!' I let go.

"'Yes, his clothes, too! And you needn't try to pretend it's another suit, either. For I'd remarked, remarked in particular that new sort of button-hole bridge stitching, and the way the collar—collar was re-enforced. Not that I care a bit more for him, though, than I do for you! And it there's any gentleman—gentleman left in you at all you'll go home and give them back to him!'

"I went home all right, hitting the two

door edges and the cloak stand on my way to open air.

"And by the time I was about half way back to Mrs. Grimshaw's my whirling brain-gear had begun to catch its cogs again, and I, oh, I'd begun to grasp the rights of it; or the wrongs, I'd better say, and my soul was boiling straight up like a pot!

"I went up stairs in five jumps, and jerked our door open. There in the corner was little Trickett, stooping over his trunk.

"I could see him go weak at the sight of me. 'Oh, Lord!' he said, and sort of felt back for the bed, or a chair, or something to let himself down on. 'And you've gone and been there too?'

"'Yes, I've been there,' I began, 'and you, sir, you—'

"'Jimmy,' he said, 'hit me if you want to. I won't guard myself. And you can't lay any name on my head that I don't know'd be true! Lord, I'm going. I've been down and paid Mrs. Grimshaw for both of us till the end of the week; it was my turn. And here's that two and a half I owed you; I left my watch in at Levi's to get it. And I'm just finishing packing up my goods. Oh, I ain't wasted any time!'

"'Well, sho'! I'd come home there with things enough to say, white-hot and blistering things; I had a whole torture-chamber outfit of verbal branding irons to apply to him. But now none of them seemed to be nigh my hand at all! 'Why, huh, Mr. Trickett,' I said, 'huh, I don't know as I just understand.'

"'Jimmy,' he began again, 'If you'd 't told me I'd been such a low-lived, treacherous, behind-your-back—! Lord, I can't tell you even now how I came to do it! It seems to me like as if I was somebody else. But on the way home, if it hadn't been for thinking of mother, and being—being in those there clothes of yours, I reckon I'd have just chucked myself into the river! And—and—'. And thereupon he choked right up.

"'Arthur Trickett!' I said, digging for Lie-Land like a craw-fish for the other bank, 'why I reckon as far as I can see—why I reckon you think I'm caring about this here dam' old new suit! Shucks!

Why, Arthur, I was mighty glad you wore them! And I was just thinking it's a mighty lucky thing we're so near of a size! And if I was het up a little, it was only by some things somebody'd said—somebody at King & Considine's!"

"'Oh, Jimmy,' he came out again, 'take your money and let me get away. And don't you ever have anything to do with me any more! And—'"

"Well, sons, I reckon I can leave out the rest of that part. It'll be about sufficient to paralyze you with the ending up of it.

"For I made little Trickett promise to go on wearing those clothes in his future interviews with Miss Lavinia. As he had started, he'd have to finish. Yes, sirs, I did that. And I did it partly by persuasion, but a whole lot more by showing him that it was all over with my going around her. For one thing, I confessed to him that she'd made remarks about my Phoenixes.

"I told him I gave her up; that it was a pleasure for me to do it. And I sure felt so swelled-out virtuous up there on the high horse of the heroic, that that was no lie, neither! Besides that, I was already having some feelings that I couldn't understand at all. I felt myself sort of 'getting a new heart,' as the preachers say. The more I had a chance to think things over, the more what that girl had said about our old pepper-and-salts got down into my gizzard. As I told myself, if I'd been just *honing* after her, like little Trickett there, I might have stood for that. But considering how I'd never cared such a whole lot for her, from the start off—

"Well, little Trickett, with me using all my strength and pushing him into it, went receptioning just three times more. But now, he sure didn't seem to get any satisfaction out of it at all!

"And when he came home that third time, he balked right down. He sat there on his trunk, grinning sort of, and puzzled sort of, and rubbing the back of his head like he didn't know what was the matter with him.

"'Jimmy,' he said, 'there's nothing happened, but it's all over just the same!'"

"'No!'"

"'That's right, Jimmy! And it ain't only that I feel meaner than Satan going around her in these here clothes. But, some way or other, I reckon I must have been deceiving myself, too, about somebody you know. Anyhow, for two weeks or more, I've felt my feelings for her kind of running out!'"

"'Sho', no!'"

"'I reckon that's right! I don't know what put the hole into my sawdust doll. I'm just the same. And she, well she is, too. Maybe it was what she said about those clothes—those other clothes of yours. Or maybe it's just because I'm such a natural born fool! But,' and he started rubbing the back of his neck again, 'this here last fortnight's been just like it was with me when I was a little shaver and had the chicken-pox. I had it, and I can tell you I sure had it pretty bad! And then, all of a sudden I didn't have it any more!'"

"Sons, that was for all the world the way I'd felt about it myself! Now wasn't that one of the most incomprehensible things you ever heard of?"

"But, Lord, didn't we feel good to be over it! 'We ain't the sort, Jimmy,' said little Trickett, 'that gets tangled up with any females! Let's light out tomorrow, and smash up some more of those sign-boards!'"

"We cut a double pigeon-wing, and then clinched in a catch-as-catch-can, till Arthur remembered he was still in those new clothes. Then he shucked himself out of them quick, and we hung them in the back of the closet to stay till we'd be breaking up for home. And so there we were, almost before we knew what had turned the flap-jack, there we were bound and clamped in the old Phoenixes full as tight as in the beginning!"

"However, we weren't caring much. King & Considine bothered me only two or three times more, all that term, so once again we could start in our Saturday afternoon 'walking talks,' ten miles on end, with arguments that had no end at all. No more about women, though, unless it was in the most far-off and cursory sort of manner! It was 'pure reason' again, and the 'nature of man', and 'of what use is it all anyway?' and 'destiny,'

and 'whither is the human race a-drifting?'

"And we'd only stop when suddenly we'd fetch up against one of those good old friends of ours:—

DON'T BE A DEAD-ALIVE, BLINKING
GALOOT,

BUT WEAR A MODERN, PHOENIX SUIT.

"Or, along with the picture of a yellow and green man doubled up at full speed:—

HE'S GOING TO TOWN, KERLUCKITY-SKOOT.
TO GET ANOTHER PHOENIX SUIT.

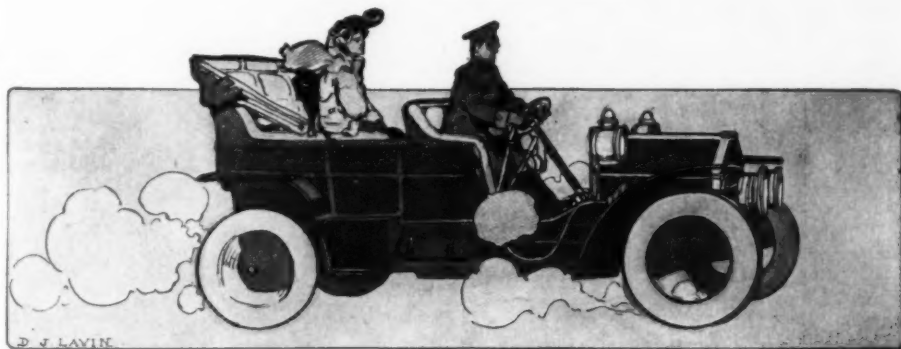
"Or, again, just that same old one-liner:—

THERE IS ART IN A PHOENIX SUIT.

"Then 'Art' would go one way for the rocks and I'd go another. And thereafter there'd be five minutes of such stone

heaving as would make the *balistæ* of old J. C. Cæsar's siege-trains in Gaul look like school-yard bean-shooters!

"But to tell you the real truth of it, we waged war on those Phoenixers now more in duty than in anger. For, somehow or other, it seemed like we'd managed to shake their salesmen's hands from off each other's shoulders; maybe it was because we'd got into the way of resting our own hands there, instead. And sometimes, coming home, when we'd see one of those signboards in between us and the glory of the sunset, we'd just go along pretending not to notice it. And, shucks, we weren't the kind to worry ourselves over a little thing like that anyhow!"



Nanette Maneuvers

BY HENRY C. ROWLAND

"Do you love me?" snapped Nanette.

"You know I do," said Mr. Thompson, sulkily.

"I know that you love yourself; I did not know that your heart was big enough to embrace us both!"

"If I loved myself I would marry you at once."

"No, you wouldn't. If you loved me you would not care if people said that you were marrying for money."

"No one who had ever seen you would ever say that."

"If you could only hold that pace I would soon be dragged to the altar—"

"Don't be common, Nanette."

"There's the reaction! What would you like to have me do? Give away my money until our fortunes are equal; in other words, give it all away?"

"Be reasonable, Nanette; or, if that is impossible, let me be reasonable." There was a look of weariness upon his handsome face. "You have your inherited millions; I have nothing. You have also your inherited extravagances and love of luxury. You could never come down to my uncertain income, so I would have to go up to yours; become a dependency. Wouldn't you be proud of a husband like that?"

"I should always be proud of you,

Morris!" Nanette was touched, and when she was touched it was the custom for her violet eyes to fill and often overflow; then her prettiness shone through the pique as the sun burns through thin ice. There were many frosts in Nanette's darker moments, but there was always the warm sun behind the clouds.

"Don't mind if I am cross, Morris; I have to either love or hate, and when I don't love you I think I hate you like the devil!"

"Nanette!"

"I do; when you look troubled, though, I love you, no matter how nasty you've been. You are proud and selfish and inconsiderate, but I think that you would sacrifice yourself almost as soon as you would sacrifice me—"

"You mean—"

"No, I don't; I mean what I say. You lie in the dust and allow yourself to be trampled by the thousand-legged dragon, Public Opinion. But you are high-minded and honest and brave and big and handsome, and know it, and I love you and want you to marry me in a very great hurry; be engaged, anyway. I'm tired of being a maverick."

Mr. Thompson's aristocratic face assumed the set expression of a family portrait; the "death rather than dancing" expression of his Puritan ancestors. Negation was written in the thinly compressed lips.

"Never?" demanded Nanette.

"Not until my salary is adequately lucrative—"

"Don't choke yourself, Morris. Shall I thump you on the back? Why don't you say 'never' and be done with it! Did you ever sell a house? The Lord made you to buy real estate, Morris, not to sell it—there, I didn't mean to hurt you, old boy! You have my permission to kiss me—for a punishment!"

Nanette held up her piquant face like a pansy to the sun. If the face had been merely childish, the sun might have kissed it, or something might have kissed it, but there was too much of temperament lurking in the subtle lines of mouth and eyes to warrant a kiss of peace. Mr. Thompson hesitated, wavered, looked high-

minded and conscientious, and the petals shut with a snap.

"I did you an injustice!" said Nanette. "Some day you will be very rich; you are so careful! Of course, you will have to live a good while—"

"Nanette!"

"Miss Latour, if you please." The ice had skimmed the violet eyes again. "If you think that I am going to wait until the frosts of a wintry old age silver my auburn hair and walk hand in hand with you down the toboggan slide of life, you are very much mistaken! You do not fully understand my wishes. I want you, I will admit, but I also want to be married. I'm tired of being cursed with single blessedness."

"Nanette!"

"Good afternoon!"

The door of the real estate office of Morris Thompson and a fictitious company slammed with a crash which threatened the ground-glass; the front door opened swiftly to the imperious wave of a small, neatly-gloved hand. "Home!" snapped Miss Latour to her chauffeur, and the next moment the pansy face was crushed against the cushions of the automobile and staccato sobs mingled with the grind of the machinery.

Three city squares were Nanette's outside limits for tears; the last few stragglers were winked out impatiently, for Nanette had received an inspiration, and when the busy little brain was active there was no room for futile tears. She leaned forward and gave the chauffeur an address; the lumbering machine slowed, cut a wide circle, then forged ahead with protesting groans.

Nanette glanced in the mirror, dried her eyes carefully, as one would blot a letter, ran deft fingers through her hair, straightened her hat, produced a superfluous reticule from which she extracted sundry strange accessories to her peace of mind, if not her beauty. She took the "shine" from her cheeks; something was whisked across her already carmine lips; all that she needed was a bird-bath to flirt a few drops upon her feathers; the process was the same, yet some would have regarded her actions as immoral!

The big red automobile drew up be-



DRAWN BY D. J. LAVIN

"'I did you an injustice,' said Nanette. 'Some day you will be very rich.'"

neath the *marquise* of an apartment hotel, a so-called "bachelor apartments," because bachelors are supposed to be able to afford higher rent rates. Nanette sent in her card.

"If Mr. Stirling is in ask him to come to the carriage," said she. Mr. Stirling was in and obeyed the summons promptly.

"Hello, Nan." His voice was deep with a lilt of mockery; he was mostly mockery. His build seemed unnecessarily powerful, his intellectual face wore inconsistent lines of dissipation, sensual but not weak; the lines seemed due rather to strong senses than feeble will, and his eyes wore the look of one to whom nothing mattered.

"Get in," said Nanette.

"Why?"

"Get in; I'm not going to kidnap you."

"Then what's the use of getting in?" Nevertheless he got in.

"Where do you want to go?" she asked.

"Anywhere—with you. Loose your lightning; let her roll!"

"Where were you going?"

"To the club—after a few of the hairs of the dog—but never mind, my heart is sufficiently stimulated."

"Can you really get along without? Shall I stop at a drug store—"

"I can get along with nothing else as long as I am with you," he answered, with a sort of mocking earnestness.

"Because I want to talk with you. Jim, you are the only man friend that I have."

"The rest are all suitors?"

"Yes, or else don't like me."

"By which I take it they are ex-suitors. Proceed. We are listening."

"Jim, I am, as you know, very much in love with Morris Thompson."

"You are, as I feared, very much in love with Morris Thompson. I am very sorry; he is an ass!"

"But he absolutely refuses to marry me."

"I beg his pardon; he is an imbecile."

"Nevertheless, I am in love with him."

"It is often contagious. What are his scruples; afraid that people will say he is a fortune-hunter?"

"How did you know that?"

"I didn't; I know Morris Thompson. I would like to give people a chance to

say that I married for money."

"You have had several opportunities."

"I did not need the money then."

"Do you need it now?"

"Like the mischief."

"Will you borrow?"

"Like a shot."

"Very well. Will five hundred help?"

Nanette signalled for a stop and extracted from her wrist-bag a check-book and a gold fountain pen.

"It will more than help; it will rescue—but, look here, Nan—"

"Be still, Jim. We have known each other from childhood, have we not? We have not seen much of each other lately because I've been painting in Paris and you've been painting in New York." Nanette began to write the check. An expression which was a stranger, which the features did not know how to entertain, crept into Mr. Stirling's hard face.

"Oh, look here, Nan—"

"Kindly be still! What difference does it make to me? And, who knows, it might keep the sheriff away from the door. Be careful, it's still wet!"

"Thanks." She caught a glimpse of a strange face as he turned away for a moment. The check fluttered, held by one corner.

"This is an aside. It has nothing to do with my errand, Jim. I came to you because, as I say, you are the only man friend I can think of. I give you that insignificant check for the same reason. Friendship gives one the right to give as well as ask, does it not?"

"Perhaps so. Can't say. Never had any experience."

"Then it's time you had; I'm going to ask advice and probably a favor."

"Won't warrant the advice, but you can count on the favor, if it's anything good for you."

"Morris flatly refuses to marry me. He says that he loves me, whereas I know that he hates you as only—"

"A Puritan can hate a cavalier. He has the advantage of me; it never occurred to me to hate him."

"Don't be insulting, Jim; remember that I am in love with him."

"There seem always to be compensations for the congenital chump."

"He considers you worthless and vicious—"

"Glimmerings of intelligence—"

"And generally detests you. He describes you as 'one of those unprincipled profligates who menace our social system.'"

"Gad, how he must love to roll that out! He's in the wrong business, Nan. He ought to be offering heavenly estates instead of those on Long Island Sound."

"Please don't interrupt. Some of his views are narrow, Jim, I admit, but he is really a splendid fellow. Everyone admits that. He was voted the most popular man in his class at college."

"No wonder he can't earn a living—"

"And he is a magnificent athlete, and so good-looking."

"Just created to be supported!"

"He should have been rich—"

"Here's his opportunity. Fortune, after all, is only a matter of judging the ripeness of the moment, just as one thumbs a melon."

"I intend that he shall embrace—eh—seize it, and I want you to help me."

"I'll do it, even at the price of helping him." A grimness settled on the hard face of Mr. Stirling and he stared moodily at the people they were passing. "I don't suppose it really makes any difference whether you're in love with him or not," he observed, as one communing with himself. "You think that you are and won't be happy till you get him. Then you'll probably be sorry, like a puppy chasing a toad."

"You are a rough brute, Jim."

"What do you want me to do; threaten to marry you myself?" There was again the note of flippant earnestness in the mocking voice of Mr. Stirling.

"Yes. Announce our engagement."

"Eh! What!" The mockery was swept aside; he glared at her as if about to shake her.

"Yes, Jim," she answered. There was a flutter in her voice; her mind grew suddenly confused. Something in the masculine roughness of his tone shocked her femininity; she dropped her cloak of cool assurance and felt unclothed, embarrassed, puzzled, and wound up in helpless silence.

"Didn't mean to scare you, Nan." She

marvelled at the unexpected note of gentleness, "but you don't really mean it."

"But I do, Jim," she pleaded. "That is, of course, if you don't mind."

His short laugh brought the blood to her cheeks and the tenderness of his voice kept it there. She had never thought to find any tenderness in him.

"What a baby you are, Nan." The color deepened. Morris never called her a baby. It was cheeky of Jim, especially when she had just given him a check for five hundred dollars, and yet it was rather nice, too!

"A mere kid—ought to have a nurse. Fancy your being engaged to me!" The contempt in his voice at the mention of himself brought the ever-ready tears of pity to her eyes. "Clever, though. Morris would immediately proceed to convolute; have epileptiform convolutions, like a duck that's swallowed a live locust! Then, when his agony had reached the supreme limits of lachrymose self-sacrifice, he would come forward, a weeping martyr to his love, and say: 'Enough! Dismiss this rounder! Rather than see you lose your soul I myself will!'"

"Don't! Oh, don't!" Nanette pressed both hands to her eyes as if to shut out what she knew to be a faithful delineation. "You make him appear such—"

"An ass? You flatter me. He does it himself, don't you think?"

"You are too caustic, Jim," she protested. Protesting was new to Nanette; insistence was her usual method. "Everyone admits that Morris has a fine mind—"

"Even Morris himself. That's just the trouble; it's so fine that he can't bear to give any of it away."

Nanette was irresolute, again assailed by her new uncertainty. She felt childishly inadequate to defend the absent favored one. Everyone said that Morris was a fine fellow, just as everyone said that Jim was a good-for-nothing, or worse things. Morris was supposedly brilliant—at everything but the sale of real estate, yet Nanette could never remember Morris having bundled up her ideas and crammed them back into the closet as Jim was doing. She resented it, and this helped her a little.

"Morris is a man of high ideals, Jim.

and he feels as he does more on my account than his own. He wants my husband to command the respect of society; he thinks that we should wait; but who is going to give me back these years?" Her voice was tremulous.

The mockery in the stony eyes of Mr. Stirling vanished. His hard face softened.

"Forgive me, Nan. I used to have high ideals myself, but there's only one of them left, and that's the reason—I say, Nan, do you think that you really love him?" He looked at her curiously.

"I—I think that I must, Jim. I was never in love before, so, of course, I can't be—be absolutely sure, but I think that I must, to go to so much trouble. Don't you, Jim?"

"I think that you will be as long as he's at large. When you get him penned and have a chance for a good close look at him, perhaps you'll think differently. Your scheme's not a bad one, barring the material involved; not half bad, for a woman to dope out. When it's known that you're engaged to me there'll be an awful howl, and if Morris has got the sense that goes with his style of beauty he'll see his chance to dash in and snatch you from the shipwreck of your happiness amidst the plaudits of the society of which he stands so much in awe. You see, people will then say: 'Poor fellow, he never would have married her except to rescue her.'"

"What a perfectly beastly way you have of looking at things."

"True, isn't it?"

"That's what makes it so beastly."

"Not my fault. I'll shut up. You go ahead, Nan, and tell me what you want done. It's going to strain your respectability a bit to be engaged to a gentleman of my supposed gaieties, but since you're going to chuck me in the end you'll rise like a salamander from the flames; no, I'm the salamander; you'll be a phoenix, only—" He tore the check slowly into small pieces and let them filter through his fingers into the mire of the street.

"What are you doing?"

"Don't forget to cross off the stub. You see, it's hardly a salaried job." The early irony had found its way back into the reckless voice. It's rather a—eh—labor of love."

"It's nothing of the sort! It's merely a friendly act, just like my giving you the check."

"Either would be all right, alone, but they don't go well together; like a crab-salad and ice-cream."

"Oh, very well. If you are going to be foolish we will call the whole thing off. I'm not going to accept a favor of a man who won't permit me to do him one. I never would have accused you of sentiment, Jim, but never mind. Have you any other bad character you can think of whom I might secure in your place—There! I know of just the man!"

"Who?"

"Never mind."

"Don't do that. I'll see it through."

"And take the check?"

"No. Hang the check!"

"I suppose you know your own affairs," said Nanette, weakly. Like most women who have never known want, she could not conceive of money being a very real necessity. An inconvenience to be without, and she had offered the check as she might have offered a surplus umbrella. If he really did not want it he could not be much inconvenienced.

"When do you want to throw your bomb?" asked Mr. Stirling.

"In about a week; we must be seen about together first. Have you anything for to-night?"

"No."

"Then you may take Auntie and me to the play. I'll get the tickets now. Afterwards we will go to supper. Can you meet me at the Humphrey's tea to-morrow afternoon?"

"I'm not allowed there."

"As bad as that? You will be in a fortnight."

"Good! I'll walk in behind you and grin like a dog brought into the parlor by his master."

"Then you must come to see me very often."

"The butler will find me wagging my tail on the doormat every time he sweeps the steps."

"He doesn't sweep the steps. As soon as our engagement is announced we'll be invited together to dinners."

"Good. I won't need the check after all."



DRAWN BY D. J. LAVIN

'What do you suppose they are saying?'" See page 438

"I wish you'd take it, anyway. Will you?"

"No."

"I'm going to the dressmaker's now. Where are you going?"

"Set me down here."

"What do you suppose they are saying?" asked Nanette a fortnight later as she and Mr. Stirling passed the windows of his club.

"I don't suppose; I know. Not that it's any intellectual feat to tell what men in a club window are talking about."

"What are they talking about?"

"There goes Nanette Latour; stunning girl. Wonder how long it'll take her to get enough of Jim Stirling. That's what they're saying."

"They haven't much confidence in you, Jim."

"Never attempted to inspire it. Only decent trait I've got."

"You inspire it in me without trying."

"Then I've got two."

Nanette stole a sidelong glance at his face; it was fuller than it had been two weeks before and there was a color on the high cheeks which had then been lacking. It was a rugged face; strong rather than handsome and should have belonged to a sailor or a soldier.

"Being *fiancé* agrees with you, Jim," said Nanette, brightly. "You look better than you did two weeks ago." She studied him more attentively and was struck by the clearness of his complexion.

"Have you stopped drinking?" she asked abruptly.

"What do you want to know for?"

"Never mind. Have you?"

"Yes."

"When did you stop?"

"Two weeks ago. You didn't suppose that I was going to be about you reeking of cocktails, did you?"

"I didn't think of it. I knew that you would do nothing that you shouldn't when you were with me, Jim. Was it hard to stop?"

"Rather, at first."

"What did you do it for?"

"Wrote a play."

"A play! Not really, Jim! A real live play?"

"I thought it was fairly dead, but Dick Claverham likes it."

"Claverham, the actor? Do you know him?"

"Known him for a good while. He read it last night; said he'd put it on. Wants me to do another."

"Oh Jim! I'm—I'm so glad, I'm so grateful."

"All your doing. I'm the one to be glad and grateful."

"When—when are you going to drink again, Jim?"

"Hadn't thought. At your wedding, probably, if I get a bid to it."

Nanette glanced quickly away and at the lofty spires of the cathedral as they rose a frosted white against the perfect blue of the winter sky. The spires grew blurred, quivered, began to totter as if an earthquake was rocking their bases.

"My house shall always be open to you, Jim, no matter what you do or what you are."

"Thanks. How about Thompson?"

"I said my house. But I am so excited about the play, Jim. When am I to see it? What is it; what kind of a play?"

"Comedy; I was feeling too beastly to write anything else. When I showed it to Claverham he read it through with a glum face; never so far flattered it as to grin from start to finish. The more he read the sadder he got until I wanted to kick him. If it had been tragedy I'd have burst with pride. When he finished he stared at the fire in a melancholy way."

"The brute!"

"No, it was because he liked it and it presented a business possibility, that was all."

Nanette skipped like a child of six. "I knew that you had it in you to do something clever, Jim. And to think that I should have been the one to have brought it out! They reached the house. "Do come in and tell me all about it," begged Nanette

"I'd like to, little girl, but I can't. Got an engagement with Claverham; he wants certain parts shifted on account of the expense of staging. I'll bring it up in a day or two and bore you a bit. Good-bye."

Nanette dashed up the steps, her face aglow, her eyes sparkling. Before she had pressed the bell the door was swung open by Mr. Thompson, outward bound, top-coated, hatted, gloved, and caned. He stopped in time to prevent a collision, glanced at Nanette, then at the departing figure of Mr. Stirling.

"I—eh—am—" he paused discreetly.

"I wish to have a talk with you, Nanette," he remarked austerely.

"I am not sure that Miss Latour is in,"

at the moment she was hardly meet for fight and disliked the idea of not doing herself justice.

"Can't you call tomorrow? I'm tired."

"You are looking bad, Nanette," observed Mr. Thompson. Nanette was, just for the moment. He would not have thought so if he had seen her face as she dashed up the steps.

"I never felt better in my life. Oh, all right, come in if you want to." She reflected wisely that one sleeps better on



DRAWN BY D. J. LAVIN

"She threw herself face downward on the divan." See page 460

replied Nanette. "Perhaps it would be well to ring and ask."

"Please don't be frivolous; my errand is quite important—to me, at least, and I hope it will prove so to you."

Nanette reflected swiftly that she had known exactly what those last words were to be and just exactly the tone in which they were to be uttered. She did not feel in the mood for quarreling; she wished to be alone and put her mind in order, and if there was any time left, to think of Jim and his play. She felt that

wounds than upon nervous expectation. They entered the little palm room at the rear of the house, Nanette leading, sprightly but nervous, Mr. Thompson following, erect, uncompromising, with the facial expression of one of his Puritan ancestors; reeking with the smug anticipation of an unpleasant duty; an expression first invented to attend the burning of a witch.

"You are almost a stranger, Morris." Nanette's voice was a trifle tremulous.

"It is your own fault, Nanette."

"Oh, I wasn't complaining; I was mere-

ly stating a fact." Resentment was to Nanette a shield and buckler.

"Nanette, what is this ridiculous story I hear of your engagement to that—to this man Stirling?"

"I don't know what you've heard, but I'm engaged to Mr. James Stirling."

"But I thought that you were in love with—with me!"

"Did you?"

"You certainly gave me every reason to believe so. Tell me honestly, Nanette, have you done this through pique? I have been thinking a great deal about what you said when I saw you last and have about decided that you were right, dear. It is selfish of me to let my pride stand in the way of our happiness—"

"I do not quite understand. Do you realize that you are talking to an engaged girl?" Nanette could play *grande dame* at times, and this was one of them.

"But, Nanette, you surely have no serious intention of marrying this dissipated, dissolute—"

"Must I remind you again that you are speaking of my *fiancé*?"

"But you do not know him as—"

"He is one of my oldest friends."

"His behavior has quite forfeited his right to—"

"His behavior since he has been engaged to me has more than compensated for that, Morris. Now, please don't say anything—"

"Then he has imposed upon your simplicity, Nanette." Mr. Thompson's righteous anger was brewing into one of the pale rages which start slowly, like an easterly gale beneath a thickening sky, and then last a week, leaving a trail of wreckage in their wakes. "The man is unprincipled, a snake-in-the-grass, a—"

But at this point the gale was deflected by a local cyclone. Nanette sprang to her feet, cheeks crimson, violet eyes lurid.

"You cad! I wish that you would say that to his face! You coward! I despise you! I hate you! I never want to set eyes on your face again! Go away! Go out of the house! quickly, before I throw something at you—" She threw herself face downward on the divan and the deluge relieved the atmospheric pressure.

At the end of at least two minutes of wild and frantic weeping she raised her head tentatively and found that she was quite alone. She looked about her, considered what she had said, nodded, smiled, approved her words. Then she dried her eyes deftly and rising swiftly rushed to the next room, there to beat the piano into utter insensibility.

"Here's the play, Nan," said Mr. Stirling, in the voice of a schoolboy and with an expression to-match. He felt suddenly juvenile.

"Oh Jim! I'm so glad! Let's take it into the den and read it at once."

"Will you read it or shall I?"

"You read it. Sit here on the divan so that I may look over your shoulder, if I like."

"Don't read ahead; it spoils the dramatic effect." Mr. Stirling began to shove the cushions out of the way. "Hello! Who spoiled this little pink silk chap? Someone's poured a bucket of water over him."

"My fault," said Nanette, contritely. Mr. Stirling regarded her keenly from beneath his heavy eyebrows.

"Tears?"

Nanette nodded. "Morris was here yesterday; he asked me to marry him." She dropped her violet eyes; not so far however, that she failed to catch the death grimace in the happiness of the face beside her.

"Did, eh? Not very wild, is he? Lies to a dog like a woodcock. Congratulations, little girl. Hope you will be radiantly happy. Here, give me the old play and tell me all about your plans."

Nanette clutched the manuscript tightly.

"I suppose I'm out of office?" The hard old ring had found its way back into Mr. Stirling's voice.

"Not until you answer a question, Jim. Will you?"

"If I know the answer."

"Then—are you in love with me yourself?"

All of its newly-found color left the face of Mr. Stirling. However, he was accustomed to the keen-edged thrusts of Fate. He laughed shortly.

"What a greedy little kid you are; must everybody love you?"

"You said you would answer my question."

"I lied. I won't answer it."

"Why not? Don't you know the answer?"

"Oh, yes. I know the answer, but, you see, you are the *fiancée* of some one else."

Nanette reflected swiftly that Morris had not considered this insignificant detail. Then she glanced at the man at her

side; her eyes filled and a new tenderness enveloped her in a warm wave.

"You may kiss me if you like, Jim," she whispered.

"But Nan!"

"I said that you might kiss me; do you hear, kiss me! I am not engaged to Morris. I am still engaged to you, you big silly!" Her voice grew plaintive. "It's funny what a hard time I have to get any one to kiss me."

But the subsequent remarks of Nanette were too muffled to be audible.

Any Fellow Would Do As Much

BY HOMER BASSFORD

Linksmith, at the head of a procession of porters and bell boys, came out of the Kansas City hotel in which the fate of travel had placed him for a day. He had ridden about the town, dictated a few letters to the public stenographer, read awhile in his room, and now, train time thirty minutes away, he swung into a cab, saw his luggage bestowed, and went the devious course into the west bottoms, where sits the general railroad station. With ten minutes to spare, he walked up and down the platform quite aimlessly. Then he stopped before a stand on which a periodical vendor displayed attractive wares. Mechanically he bought. With a wealth of reading under his arms, he headed for the train that was to take him out west; somewhere, anywhere, it didn't matter, at that instant, whether the road went to Denver or San Francisco or the Sandwich Islands.

He couldn't get the girl out of his mind. She had treated him so decently, too, as she threw him over; confoundedly so. If she had but flashed up in anger, or dismissed him in scorn, or given a hint of hope, it wouldn't have seemed so bad. He could see her, even now, sitting three feet in front of him, her fine head thrown back, her eyes dancing, her cheeks aflame—laughing. She wasn't even surprised or glad or disappointed. She had appeared to think that he was joking; and

when he assured her, in all earnestness, that he had never felt a situation more keenly, she laughingly told him that he would get over it all in good time. Then, when he insisted that he would not, could not; when he begged for a hope, for some little reason for such indifference, she frankly told him that she could marry no man who pleaded. She would not be wooed by a plea; she would be won by a command, and the one who thus commanded must be, in every fiber of his being, equal to the undertaking.

It was quite a large order, as Linksmith viewed the matter. At that instant, he would have grovelled at her proud feet. He had no record of proud achievement to unfold to her, no promise of a career that would take him far out of the demands made upon any young fellow saddled with the not unpleasant responsibility of guarding and spending certain large moneys left by a thrifty and far-seeing dad. So, after a week of loafing about town, a week in which he caught no glimpse of the exacting Miss Christine Bethune, a week in which he had no word of her, he told his friends that he meant to leave Chicago. An old chum was sitting with Nogi outside of Port Arthur, and if there was the remotest chance of getting past the blockade, he would go straight on into the perils of war. His desperation was quite complete.

Swinging into his car at the Kansas City union station, Linksmith saw, rounding the periodical stand beyond the gates, an elderly man and a girl. The glimpse gave him a start. It was quite impossible, of course, for Christine was in Chicago, planning a journey in another direction. Anyhow, it didn't matter. It might have mattered—once; but now, even if she were really there, buying books and magazines, he wouldn't stir. He was quite sure of it. Then the train began to move. It wound its way slowly out of the station, crossed the state line into Kansas, and swept at increasing speed under the shadow of the great gray and white packing houses out of whose earnings he drew part of his revenue. The train crossed the Kaw and reached the open country. The drowsy autumn air fanned his cheek. A bunch of cows on a common moved slowly away as the engine shrieked. In the section across the aisle there was a bit of laughter out of a group that chattered in merry mood. Linksmith half closed his eyes. What could people find to laugh about? He wondered, sleepily, how he had ever dared to laugh. He was quite sure that nevermore would he so offend.

He picked up a magazine and glanced at the advertisements. A steamship company announced the sailing of a new boat from Seattle, touching at most places in the world, as it appeared from the list appended. It seemed to be a good idea. He would go to Seattle, sail westward, try his hand at war correspondence and come back, hardened in mind and body, to command the proud Christine. Linksmith pulled himself together with a start. The autumnal air had all but put him to sleep, and he was dreaming dreams. He tackled the magazines anew, but they failed to change the course of his thinking. Then he got out his pencil and slowly wrote his name at the top of each cover. Not that he cared to keep any of them, or withhold from the other passengers the privilege of filching them to the last one. It was at least a way of passing the time, this scribbling of his name. Then, quite without intent, he wrote Christine's name, "Christine Bethune," beneath his own. They looked rather well together,

"Harold Linksmith and Christine Bethune!" Confound the luck, why shouldn't they be together, always?

He slapped the magazines down on the seat at his side, settled scores with the various conductors and collectors, and went out into the vestibule to stretch his legs. He was already half sorry he had come. He might be running his motor car down Michigan avenue instead, or taking a swim at the club—or—or—and again his thoughts went racing. Yes, after all, he was glad to be out of town. Chicago was perfectly fiendish, now; it would always be so. He lighted a cigarette and puffed it two or three times. Then he reentered the car and made for his seat. The porter and an amiable old gentleman, chiefly distinguished for well-kept, snowy whiskers, were standing by his section, looking down upon Linksmith's collection of periodicals. The old gentleman appeared to be in search of the train's news agent, and the porter was engaged in explaining that the quantities of magazines and books before him were private property. Linksmith caught a fragment of the conversation.

"You are quite welcome to anything you care for," he said, as he faced the inquiring old gentleman. "I've quite enough for a journey around the world—and I mean to get out at Denver, or Frisco, or Honolulu."

He actually smiled; and discovering the fact for himself, he resentfully resumed his expression of solemnity.

"You are very kind," the old gentleman said, in soft speech. "I wanted to buy a magazine or two for my niece in the next car. We tried to get something at the station, back in Kansas City, but there wasn't time."

"Nothing easier," Linksmith said, picking up the half dozen that lay on top. "Here, take these and welcome. If you care for any more, come back for them. I've got 'em to burn."

He placed the magazines in the old gentleman's hands.

"I am getting out at Topeka," the ancient one said, "but I shall have our porter return these this evening, or tomorrow. My niece will want something to while

away the time after I leave her. Thank you very much."

The old gentleman made a note of Linksmith's section number.

"And if you want any of them in the course of the afternoon, you can get them by sending into the next car, section twelve. You are very kind, I am sure."

"Pray don't speak of it," Linksmith smiled, half out of patience. He was glad to see the things go, he wouldn't have so many to read. Then he tumbled again into his seat and watched the unrolling of the Kansas prairie. Little stations flew back of him, and lazy cows ambled off the right of way. Frisky horses kicked up their heels and droves of pigs grunted in confusion as the great train sped on. Linksmith wondered if it wouldn't be rather nice to be a cow or a horse or a pig. They didn't have much to do, no responsibility, and when the time came—well, in the case of the hog and the cow, the packer never read a death warrant. Linksmith had heard his; he could hear it yet.

Eventually, the train got to Topeka. Linksmith knew, because he asked the porter. It was easier to ask the porter something, anything, than to read. Somehow, he felt that he had heard the name of the town before. He tried to think when and where. After a great mental effort he recalled that it was at Topeka that the old gentleman with the niece was to get out. Nice name, "Topeka," he thought. Sounded like something Indian. Linksmith even aroused himself enough to look out of the window. He caught a glimpse of the elderly gentleman with the white whiskers. He wondered if the old rascal was making away with his magazines. He was in a beastly state of mind was Linksmith. The old fellow stood several feet away from the train and smiled, looking toward the car next to Linksmith's. He appeared quite silly, Linksmith thought. Then the elderly person grinned and waved his hand. As the train moved, he took off his hat and called out a loud, old-fashioned "Goodbye."

"Take care of yourself, honey," he shouted, when the train began to take on speed, "and be sure to write to me, Chris—"

A terrific blast of the engine's whistle drowned the rest of the sentence. Linksmith was not quite awake, but the syllable caused him to start. He looked about. The porter was standing in the aisle, holding the six borrowed magazines.

"The young lady in twelve, in the next car, suh, says she's much obliged, but she don't care to read, suh."

"Put 'em down," Linksmith snapped. Then, to himself: "Six magazines at one time is a big dose for one of these prairie belles. Suppose they frightened her."

Mechanically he picked up one of them. Someone had drawn a pencil just below his name. He looked again. The name of Christine Bethune had been wholly and effectually erased.

"The impudence!" he exclaimed. He picked up the others. There he saw the same thing, through the six; all marked alike. Linksmith was quite awake now. He saw none of the cows and pigs and horses, none of the prairies that stretched away for miles to a flat horizon. He did not hear the roar of the train, and the soft air of autumn that beat in at the open window did not mean anything to him. He pushed all of his magazines into one disordered pile, called the porter, had himself carefully brushed, and forthwith set out for the other car.

Of course it was she. Linksmith rushed down the aisle to section twelve and stood before her. There was neither surprise nor gladness in her greeting. His extended hand was overlooked and the effulgence of his smile found no reflection in the look she gave to him.

"My dear Miss Bethune," Linksmith began cheerfully, "you cannot possibly know how pleased I am to find you here."

"I assume," she said icily, "that you are following me, and that you waited until Uncle Charles got out go—"

"Your assumption, my dear Christine," he responded, with some asperity, "is quite without foundation. On the contrary, I am running away from you."

She regarded him silently. He wanted to sit by her side, but since she occupied the center of the seat, that was hardly possible. The place opposite was well covered with wraps and luggage. More-

over, she had not asked, not even hinted, that he be seated.

"It happens," he went on, "that for the present I am not running away as I expected, but that fact is due to the accident that brought us to be passengers on the same train. Now," and he smiled as if he meant to attack the subject airily, "we appear to be running away together."

He shifted to the other foot and clung to the seat as the train rounded a sweeping curve.

"You will have the goodness to turn back at the next stop," Christine said, quite seriously; "and I feel too, that I may ask that you do not write my name on any more of your magazines."

He colored. "That was really indefensible," he said. "I did it quite absently-mindedly, I assure you. I wasn't thinking of—that is—"

"You weren't thinking of—you weren't thinking at all," she broke in, stumbling a trifle.

"Exactly," he replied with decision. "I was just rambling, and my pencil—it rambled too." He grinned as he extricated himself.

She looked out of the window. Linksmith leaned a bit and peered out over her head, to see if there was anything worth looking at; but there was only the broad, rolling monotony of prairie.

"Not very interesting, is it?" he asked, above the roar of the train. There was no reply. He sat on the arm of the seat.

"Would you mind my having dinner in here?" he asked abruptly. "One must eat, you know."

"I shall not dine soon," she said.

"Then I shall wait," Linksmith went on, spiritedly, "I am not at all hungry."

"Oh, but you mustn't," she said, turning about and facing him. "I really can't allow it. You must go back to your own car, and—and leave the train at the next station."

"But I'm going to Hong Kong, you understand, and I'm sure you wouldn't want me to spend hours between trains in one of those queer prairie stations."

"Some of them are not so pokey," she allowed herself to say. "There's a Carnegie library in one of them only a little way on."

"But I've got a Carnegie library in my car, bought it at Kansas City," he said half idiotically.

"You might go back and read it," she went on, resuming her gaze prairieward.

Linksmith rose from his seat. "I think I'll go out and shoot myself," he said.

She made no reply. There was another awkward pause. "I say," he resumed, "I believe I'll go out on the platform and shoot jack rabbits."

Only silence. Linksmith gave up. He walked down the aisle and out of the car. It was all of seven o'clock. He felt sure that Christine was ready to dine. He turned back. When he again stood in front of section twelve, he found her looking over a Pullman *carte de jour*.

"Bully!" he cried, as he steadied himself by the side of her seat. "I rather thought you'd think better of it."

She put the card down.

"If you don't go back to your car," she said, with resolution, "I shall not dine. I really can not allow you to follow me about in this way. When I told you, in Chicago, that—that—"

"That you wouldn't marry me," Linksmith said, helping her out.

"I meant it. And you went away, seeming to understand."

"I tried to go away," he said with some feeling in his voice. Then he smiled. "I got a good start, missed my train at Kansas City and here—here I find you on my trail."

He was sitting impudently on the arm of the seat.

"I am on my way to Pasadena," she ventured, not caring to deny his ridiculous statement.

"If you won't dine with me I shall go hungry," he said.

"It doesn't matter to me," she replied, "although I fancy that it won't be so pleasant for you."

She actually smiled, ever so faintly. Linksmith rose, bringing his lips together to express determination. He made as much of a bow as the swaying car would permit, and with dignity withdrew. He resolved to retire for the day. Tomorrow might bring better results. Eight or nine hours afterward he looked out of his

berth and saw that it was another day. He got up, spruced himself carefully, and made his way into the neighboring car. Miss Bethune was very beautiful in a change of suit, her morning visage was bright with youth and health and spirit. Again she perused the *carte de jour*.

"Good morning," he said merrily. "I hope you rested well."

"Thank you, very well, and you?" she added, with sweeping dignity.

"As well as one might expect. It's not exactly the comfortable thing to go to bed supperless."

She looked a surprised inquiry, which she at once changed into an expression of indifference.

"Yes," he went on, soberly. "I sha'n't eat until you allow me to come in here and dine or lunch or breakfast with you. I am determined."

"You are ridiculous, quite," she said, still looking at the bill of fare.

"And hungry," he added. "My dear Christine," he continued, his voice forming a plea, "it is very dreadful to go without food, when one is well and strong."

She shook her head. "I am fully decided," she said. "Please don't come in again."

"There, now, aren't you a bit cruel? Why, I've done nothing more terrible than to ask you to marry me. You said 'No.' I decided that you meant it, and after a miserable week in old Chicago, doing nothing but think, think, I piled into a train with my traps and set out for Japan."

"You said you were going to Hong Kong," she said quickly.

"So I did. Let's see, that's in China, isn't it? Anyhow, I got started. When I struck Kansas City I went driving and missed my train. Then I took the next one, this one, and while I was sitting by myself in the other car I amused myself by—that is, I forgot myself and wrote your name on my magazines. That wasn't so very bad, was it?"

He looked at her earnestly. She had shown no interest. In fact, she appeared to be politely suppressing a yawn. Linksmith sighed.

"Now," he went on, "it does seem a pity that you won't allow me even to—to

associate with—to while away—that is—"

"*Pour passer le temps?*" she inquired, in indifferent sarcasm.

"Oh, I didn't mean that, Christine, on my word I didn't. I don't know what I meant. I only wanted to say that it seems cruel of you not to allow me a little word, a little hope."

He boldly pushed the re-assembled traps off the opposite seat and sat down. She drew off toward the window.

"Come, Christine," he said, leaning over. "Let us begin again. Tell me that you didn't mean all you said, that I am not such an impossibility, after all, that—"

"You are evidently at sea in your recollection of what I said," Miss Bethune replied.

"You said that you would never be wooed by a plea, that you must be won by a command."

"In effect, yes," Christine replied. "And it is quite certain that you are progressing in the opposite direction."

Linksmith looked out of the window. A jack rabbit was putting away for dear life through the prairie grass.

"By jove, you're right," he said. "Anyhow, you might allow me to stay my hunger with a bite of breakfast."

"Have you really eaten nothing?" Christine asked.

"I am faint from lack of food," Linksmith returned, endeavoring to summon a pallor.

"Well, there is some heroism in that."

She smiled, even merrily. Linksmith thought that he saw a hope in her eyes but when he put out his hand she withdrew into her corner and said:

"You must go away. I shall soon be eating my breakfast alone."

"Very well," he said, rising slowly. "I shall do as you say; but it is really quite cruel of you. At this rate I shall be thoroughly emaciated before we reach —"

"Hong Kong," she supplied.

"When you have breakfasted," he said, stiffly, as he started to leave, "would you mind coming over to see me shoot jack rabbits from the rear platform? It's good fun and—by jove! I've never told you that—I'm the best revolver shot at the club!"

"It must be quite a brave thing to shoot jack rabbits from an express train; they can't get back at you, you know," she said.

This was withering. Unable to find a reply, Linksmith made off as best he could. In his own Pullman, he sought counsel of the black imp who made and unmade the corporate beds.

"After you've brought my breakfast," he said, boldly, "I want you to go into the next car and in some way let the porter there know that I haven't eaten since we left Kansas City."

The black man, having served Linksmith's appetite, looked his polite amazement. "And see to it, will you, that your partner tells the young lady in twelve that I'm really in a bad way from lack of food?"

The imp smiled.

"I understand, suh. I think I can tell her myself, suh."

When Linksmith had bestowed his breakfast, he smoked two cigars and waited for the report of his emissary. The time that passed covered about thirty minutes, but Linksmith felt that thirty hours were dragging by. Then the porter came back. He did not wear the manner of a conqueror. There was, indeed, something sheepish in his manner.

"What did you say—what did she say?" Linksmith demanded.

"She said, suh, that you was travelin', suh, for your dyspepsy, suh."

"The devil!"

"Yes, suh."

Linksmith paid a fifty cent piece for the diagnosis. He then turned to cigarets. Another hour dragged by. Then another and another. Linksmith didn't feel equal to a set-to over the question of luncheon; so alone, he nibbled a sandwich and drank a pot of tea. Afterward, he went into the smoking room and engaged in a violent altercation with a man from St. Louis. He was in a beastly state of mind, was this Linksmith. Twice in the afternoon he nerved himself to the point of resuming his tilt with Christine, but each time he came to a stop in the vestibule of her car, feeling that he was short of ammunition and that his practice wasn't good. At six, he was again hungry. He would

make another effort, perhaps the last.

Christine had just resumed a perusal of the bill of fare. Linksmith thought, as he stepped into her car, that he saw her eyes looking over the top of it, as if she had half suspected his approaching presence. But he wasn't sure. He came up to her gravely, resting his hands upon the seats as if a great weakness beset him.

"You will see," he began solemnly, "that the absence of food is having its effect."

"A phenomenon frequently observed by physicians and other men of science," Miss Bethune replied. She pushed away the wraps that filled the opposite seat. "You may rest, if you like," she said, in cold cordiality.

Linksmith fairly tumbled into the place made for him.

"Thank you, oh so much!" he exclaimed, with seemingly genuine feeling.

"I shall make one concession," she went on. "I shall permit you to keep me company while I dine."

"Tantalus!" Linksmith exclaimed, in assumed distress. "That is something," he went on resignedly.

Christine placed her order with great attention to detail. She requested half a dozen things that Linksmith especially liked; and when at last the dinner came and began to vanish, she looked at him with a calm disregard for his comfort that filled him with wonder, fresh admiration, and inward distress.

"Now," she said, when it was all over and the table removed. "You may remain here for one hour, a reward for your patient persistence. Do you know," she went on, "I am willing to concede that you have qualities I had not suspected."

He was grateful for this crumb of comfort. "It is really very kind of you," he said, gobbling it up.

Christine looked out of the window. The dusk was gathering. Now the country grew rougher, always sloping upward, the great rise to the roof of the western world. The train raced over rumbling bridges; slender, light things that seemed as steel and wooden spider webs stretched from earth to sky.

"The air is cool," she said.

Linksmith grasped the window at her

side and half wrenched his wrists in bringing it down.

"Quite," he said. "Allow me to put this wrap across your shoulders."

She leaned forward a bit and he passed the cape back of her, his hand touching, for a fleeting fraction of a second, the loose hair about her neck. Then he settled in his seat to look at her. She was the prettiest woman in the world. The gray eyes were black, now, and her tresses, golden in Chicago sunlight, were of rich brown, falling in waves about a brow that stood high and white above cheeks and mouth and nose altogether incomparable.

"I should ask you to dine," she said, "if I didn't believe—if it were not for—"

"Really, would you mind!" he exclaimed.

"—If I didn't think you have been deceiving me," she went on.

"Miss Bethune—Christine!"

Linksmith's tone cried out for his injured feelings. "How could you?" he asked plaintively.

"I couldn't," she replied, and her eyes sparkled in the car's lights, "but the porter told me, and I gave him fifty cents for his frankness. He said that you had the best appetite on the train."

Linksmith looked his feeling of utter idiocy. He thought of two or three things that might be said, but he was afraid that they would not sound quite right. Nothing would, just then. He tried to smile, but his features were frozen. Finally he managed:

"You didn't believe I was in earnest?"

"I had begun to hope so," she said quietly. "It was something to learn of what appeared to be new and admirable evidences of sincerity where—"

"Their existence might be least suspected?"

Linksmith felt somewhat better in administering the blow himself. She nodded.

"You were not even clever about it," she went on lightly.

"You might have bribed your porter to stay bribed."

"It was all a joke, a miserable joke," Linksmith said, having no other defense.

"Were you joking when you asked me to marry you?" Christine went on.

"Christine, I would give my life for you. If one of these confounded bridges were to go down into one of these treacherous *arroyos* I'd prove it."

"But it won't, there is hardly a chance."

"No, I'm afraid there isn't," Linksmith replied, quite out of spirit. "If this were the high water season I might hope."

"You will at least prove your sincerity by turning back at Denver."

Linksmith looked at her reproachfully. "Wouldn't you like to have me go on and prove my worth by breaking into Port Arthur as a war correspondent?"

"Port Arthur will be open to the world before you get there," Christine suggested merrily. "I see that General Nogi has captured Chow-chow hill." She held out a newspaper.

"Rather more successful than my siege at the fortress of your affections," Linksmith went on, feeling the stupidity of the speech. He was on the point of assuming a dense silence, when the train's speed was appreciably reduced. There was a mighty swish of the air brake, and for the instant Linksmith half believed that his opportunity had come. Steel ground on steel, the whistle of the locomotive shrieked hysterically, and with a reverse that shocked every passenger the cars came to a dead stop.

"The engineer appears to have beaten you out of your chance," Christine said, with all the calmness she could muster. Within, she was thoroughly frightened. "I suppose," she went on, keeping her tongue and wits, "I suppose we are on the edge of a precipice."

Before Linksmith could make answer or find thought to start in search of information, the porter rushed into the car, as ashen as the nature of his skin would allow. Linksmith jumped from his place at Christine's side and took the Senegambian by the shoulders.

"Quick!" he cried, shaking the wretch, "what is the matter?" There followed a moment of strained silence. The porter, his head drawn between his shoulders, half turned in the direction of the door through which he had just come.

"Hide yo'selfs," he moaned, "they is comin' that-away."

On the instant, there appeared at the

far door as terrible a pair of ruffians as the western world has ever whelped. They were masked and bearded and armed as an arsenal is armed. With mighty oaths they strode into the car, shooting at the lights as they came. Linksmith saw it all at a glance. Christine, standing in section twelve, gazed on the scene in the petrification of fright. One of the flying bullets struck the mirror at her back, scattering bits of glass and quicksilver over the seat. Linksmith, with no mind for danger jumped to her side. He grasped her arm with a grip that pressed into her soft flesh.

"Sit down," he whispered. "Get your head back of the seat."

She would have resisted. It was her nature to resist; but his voice was firm and calm and his fingers were like steel. She dropped to her knees and Linksmith faced about. The two highwaymen had come to a stop between the third and fourth sections and were rifling the pockets of two lone women who were alternately begging for mercy and explaining that they had no more money. They had hidden it under the seat at the first alarm. Linksmith watched. More shots were fired, for purposes of intimidation, and outside a sentinel was emptying his gun in the air for the same important purpose. Christine, her head on the seat, looked out of the corner of her eye and saw Linksmith's bold, exposed position. She reached forth and touched his hand.

"You will be killed," she whispered, but not so softly that he failed to hear and feel the import of her speech. He gave no sign. Christine noted that his hand was quite still, that it showed not a trace of the quiver that was in her own trembling fingers. The robbers came on. One of them put his revolver under the nose of a man who was selling pistols for a New England house. The other got every cent that a Richmond minister had, as well as a round-trip ticket, requiring identification and validation.

"The ticket, my dear friend, will be of no possible value to you, and I shall be dreadfully embarrassed without it," the minister pleaded.

There was no reply from the ruffians in masks and whiskers. Now they were

within three seats of where Linksmith stood. One of the robbers, dropping a pocketbook, carelessly stooped. At the same instant the quiet Linksmith fired—two shots in one, it seemed. The man who was stooping did not get up. He tumbled forward and fell quite flat in the aisle. The other man's pistol arm dropped to his side and the weapon fell to the floor and exploded with tremendous noise and no damage. Linksmith moved as summer lightning moves. He skipped over the fallen man to the other, who now leaned heavily against the seat. Linksmith had clubbed his target pistol, which had slain no jack rabbits that day, and with the butt of it he rapped the standing bandit a stunning blow on the temple. It was not the time to take a chance. The other man was still prostrate. Linksmith gathered the loose artillery together and deftly passed his hands over the vanquished robbers for more.

"Here, porter," he commanded, "find the conductor and tell him to start the train. That chap outside doesn't matter."

Then everybody looked at everybody else, but mostly at Linksmith, who was busy brushing glass from the seats of section twelve. As the train started, there was a shower of bullets from without, at which everyone genuflected dutifully. But they were moving. That was something. When the conductor and half a hundred passengers crowded in, the wounded men were receiving first aid in the form of handkerchief bandages. They were propped up in seats, Linksmith keeping an eye on their movements. Someone offered a cheer for the young man in gray, and the minister's voice rose above the noise of the train. Linksmith shook his head.

"For my fellow passengers and myself," the minister shouted, "I wish to ask your name and to thank you, in behalf of all, for what you have done. You have saved our valuables," he mechanically pressed his pocket to see if the restored wallet was in place, "and you have perhaps, saved our lives. You have secured to the processes of justice two desperate criminals. By your superb exhibition of courage, by your command of a trying situation—"

At the word command, Linksmith looked at Christine, whose flushed face was already telling its own sweet story. He waved his hand in good-natured impatience, and said:

"My good friend, I assure you that it was nothing. Any fellow would do as much for—in the protection of—of the girl he is going to marry."

Christine did not turn away. Linksmith looked at her with a little glance of triumph, which only she saw and understood. The others smiled. Even the

robbers grinned through their solemn whiskers.

"Well, sir," said the minister, "if the laws of the state of Colorado will permit, may I not have the honor and pleasure of—"

The locomotive whistled for Greeley Gulch, drowning the rest of the well-meant sentence.

"I shall breakfast at nine," Christine murmured to Linksmith, who, followed by a procession of hero-worshippers, took his way to the next car.

The Sneak

BY OWEN OLIVER

Most teachers are sneaks, more or less. They've got to be, and the fellows don't blame them; but McCarthy was more of a sneak than there was any need to be, and we hated him. You see, we were the graduating class at the Academy, and the new assistant treated us as if we were just boys. We couldn't stand that.

He was a funny little Irishman; a tiny, thin chap, with a long, fierce mustache, and a voice ever so much too big for him. He wore spectacles, and he'd taken dozens of prizes for Latin and Greek, and he seemed to think he could stuff learning into us as if he was stuffing turkey. He increased the Virgil lesson from twenty to thirty lines, and gave us double the proper quantity of grammar, and longer lessons in English and everything. He couldn't keep his temper a bit, but jumped on us for the least mistake, and kept us in for anything. When we found we were bound to be kept in anyhow, we thought we might as well have some fun for it. So most of us didn't learn anything; and, when we did know things, we pretended that we didn't.

This made him mad. He used to hop up and down, like a jack-in-the-box, and stamp and shout and fairly dance at us; and one day he marched all of us up to Mr. Meaghan, the principal. We were willfully idle and stupid and obstinate, he said, and he wanted every one of us

made an example of. The principal pulled his beard, and frowned at us over his spectacles, and seemed as if he didn't know what to do. You see, he couldn't make an example of the whole graduating class, and most of us had always been considered pretty good at work.

"There is something in this that I can't make out," he said. "You boys are not dunces, or you wouldn't be in the graduating class. You don't mean to say that you can't translate this, Boyle?" Boyle was at the top of the class.

"I thought I translated it all right, sir," he said coolly—he is cool—"but Mr. McCarthy didn't."

"Umph!" said the principal. "Let me hear you."

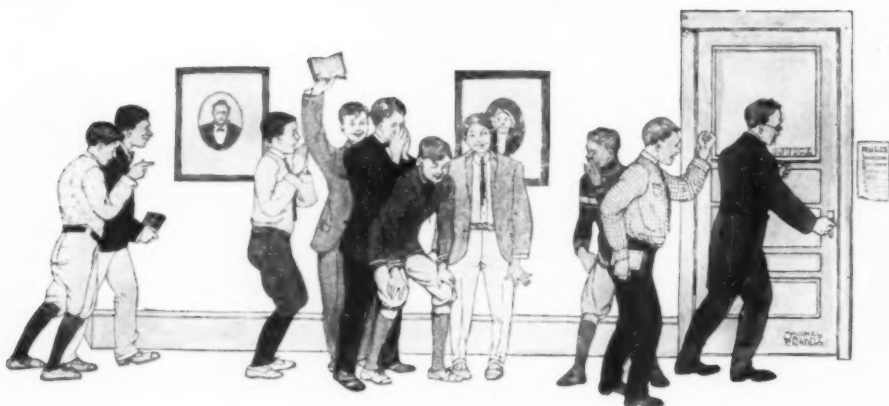
Boyle translated it like a book, of course, and gave little explanations of the doubtful bits. He is one of those curious chaps who really like lessons, and he had only made out that he couldn't do it, to annoy the Sneak.

The principal looked at McCarthy when Boyle had done; and the Sneak began to fidget about, like he always did.

"Boyle didn't translate it so to me," he said.

"How was that, Boyle?" the principal asked; and Boyle put on the innocent look that he can when he chooses.

"I don't mean to be rude to Mr. McCarthy, sir," he said, "but he flusters me;



DRAWN BY MAGINEL WRIGHT ENRIGHT

"One day he marched all of us up to the principal."

at least, I get flustered. You see, sir, if you get pulled up for nearly every word, you lose yourself."

We nearly sniggered at the idea of Boyle's losing himself in Virgil. He's read it all through twice for pleasure!

The principal pulled his beard again.

"I shouldn't have thought you were so easily flustered, Boyle," he said, "but you seem to know the lesson." He looked at the Sneak; and the Sneak turned red.

"The rest of them don't," he declared. "Try Johnson, sir." That's my name.

As a matter of fact I hadn't learnt the lesson, but I've a specially good memory, and I'd just heard Boyle. I'm not very bad at Latin, either. So I got through pretty well.

"Why didn't you say it like that to Mr. McCarthy," the principal asked.

"I got flustered, too, sir," I told him.

The principal looked as if he'd like to fluster me a little more; but he didn't. He gave us a long lecture about doing our best, and keeping up the fame of the Academy, and all that sort of thing; and he said he should look in unexpectedly sometimes and hear us himself; and we knew what to expect, if he found we hadn't learned the lessons. Then he sent us off. He kept the Sneak behind, and we were sure he would lecture him about "flustering." So we were very pleased.

We were extra careful for the next few days, and learned the lessons properly,

and waited to be flurried before we made mistakes. It never took long for the Sneak to get hot; and then we answered everything wrong. It was awful fun giving wrong answers when we knew the right ones, and we took a lot of pains thinking out the worst breaks we could make. I believe that's the true way to learn things, because you have to find out the right way to be sure of doing the wrong! Anyhow we answered jolly well when the principal heard us, and at the examinations; and we heard that he told the Sneak we were an exceptionally good class; and he hoped he wasn't too hard on us.

After that he couldn't well keep us in. So he took to spying on us, and reporting us for breaking the rules. These are awfully strict at the Academy, and a fellow couldn't have a decent time if he kept to them. The other professors knew that, and didn't see us, if they could help it, unless we were making ourselves nuisances. Then they gave it to us hot themselves, and didn't report it. We didn't mind them going for us when we deserved it. No decent fellow does.

The worst of it was that the Sneak was beastly sly. When school was dismissed he'd generally turn up unexpectedly somewhere in our neighborhood. He caught Haig and Clode and Tomlin and me in old Green's orchard; and Jackson and Smith and Tomlin and me, beyond

the milestone on the city road. The principal said he was right to report us; but there was a tacit understanding that the graduating class might go beyond that bound, if they behaved themselves. So we scored that time. He even reported Paterson and Lake for talking to some of the girls at Miss Marchant's boarding school, but the principal said he didn't see how they could help it, because they had been introduced at the dancing classes. He'd have reported half the school for going to the races, but Forbes, the mathematical professor, heard he was coming and got there first on his bicycle, and said we were with him. We always did go to the races; and we thought old Forbes spoke to the principal about it, because after that the Sneak let us alone.

Forbes is a good sort, and we all wrote home for extra money and gave him a dandy present when he got married. He made a speech and said he had always found us a real good set of chaps; and Paterson made a speech and said it was because he always treated us as if we were. I thought there was a lot of sense in that.

The last Saturday but two of the term, Tomlin and I thought we'd go and bathe in Harmer's pool. It is in the wood that belongs to old General Harmer's country estate. The professors have permission to go in the wood. It's outside the stated limits allowed the academy boys for wandering, but no one ever stopped us going there, except the Sneak.

We'd been in the water about ten minutes, when we heard some one coming. He was humming, and we recognized the Sneak's growl. He hasn't any ear for tune, but he can make a very loud noise. We got out and picked up our clothes and climbed the big oak. There is a hollow down the middle and we dressed there. We meant to have another dip when he'd gone past; but he stopped beside the tree, humming like a motor.

When we peeped out he was sitting on his clothes, and taking off his socks. Then he trotted down to the pool and took a header in. He left his things in a heap, with the spectacles on top of them, just under the branches where we were.

Tomlin says that he was the first to propose taking them, but he wasn't. I got two words out before he began. Some fellows always try to take credit for what other people have done. There wasn't any credit in it really, because it was only what any fellow would have thought of.

We decided to leave him enough to dress in and go hunting for the rest. So we only took his trousers and shoes and spectacles and coat. We put them down the hollow in the tree. We meant to make a bolt before he came out of the water; but he was quicker than we expected. So we had to get down in the hollow ourselves. He must have seen us jump down if he hadn't been so shortsighted. He was puffing and blowing, so he didn't hear that fool Tomlin laugh.

We heard him, when he missed his things! I can't write what he said, because I should get expelled for repeating it, if any one saw this. He roared like a bull, and sometimes his voice squeaked. It was great fun, only we weren't sure that he wouldn't find us. We knew he would be specially savage, because that cow Tomlin had trodden on his spectacles. He tried to make out that I did it.

We held on at the top of the hollow, ready to jump down one side of the tree, if he came up the other. We thought he mightn't recognize us without his specs; and he couldn't chase us far till he'd put on his trousers. However, he didn't think of the tree, but went off to search in some bushes by the pool. He did look funny! We slid down the other side of the tree, and got in some long grass, and crawled away, like Indians, on our stomachs, till we came to some shrubs. Then we got through a fence into a big flower garden. We were racing round a conservatory, when we ran right into a lady, and she caught hold of us. We could have got away, of course, but we didn't want her to yell, and she looked as if she could. She was very tall and plump and young, and she had a lot of light hair. She didn't look bad-natured either. Tomlin and I thought you would call her good-looking.

"You naughty boys!" she said.

"What are you doing here? I've a good mind to take you to General Harmer."

I grinned at Tomlin, and he grinned at me. When a girl says she'll tell, she generally doesn't; and when she only says she's "a good mind to," she never does.

"Ssh!" I said. "Don't make a noise or he'll hear! It's the best joke you ever heard of."

"Oh! It's a joke, is it!" She tried to frown, but any one could see she was biting her lip to keep from laughing. "I know what boys' jokes are. I've two young brothers of my own."

"You don't tell on them, though," I told her. She laughed right out this time.

"No," she agreed. "I don't; but you aren't my brothers; and I don't know what you've been doing."

"We'll tell you," I promised, "if you'll come farther away. He's one of the professors at the academy, and there'll be a row if he finds out. You needn't keep hold of us. We aren't going to run away from you."

She gave us a little shake, and let go.

"Come along," she said; and we went through some more gardens, and shrubbery, and sat down on a seat by a fountain, with an angel or a cupid or something standing on one toe in the middle. We told her all about it, without mentioning his name. She laughed a great deal.

"Oh, dear!" she said, when she got her breath again. "I wish I had been—at least, I don't wish anything of the sort. But it must have been funny to hear him. Poor man!"

"You needn't pity him," Tomlin said. "He's a sneak."

"We call him the Sneak," I told her, "because he's such a chump. The professors don't like him any more than we do, and they'll go into fits when they hear."

"I shouldn't advise you to tell them," she said. "They couldn't possibly countenance such a thing."

"We sha'n't tell them," I explained; "but some of the other boys will. They'll pretend they don't know, but they'll chuckle over it like everything, among themselves."

"I think you are mistaken," she warned us. "I am quite sure that Professor McCarthy would not laugh at it."

Tomlin and I roared till we nearly fell off the seat.

"It's McCarthy we've done it to," Tomlin said.

I've seen a girl jump at a mouse, or when you put a spider down her back; but I never saw one jump like she did.

"Professor McCarthy!" she said. "Professor McCarthy! You wicked boys! Do you mean to say you've played such an unpardonable trick on him!"

"You said it was funny," I reminded her.

"Funny! You didn't say it was Professor McCarthy."

"That's what makes it so funny," I explained. "He's such a silly, conceited, sneaky little man, and—Whew-w!"

The box in the ears that she gave me was something to whistle for, I tell you. I was too taken aback to say anything, and that idiot Tomlin grinned, till she boxed his ears, too.

"I have the honor to be engaged to Professor McCarthy," she said. She did look furious.

"I'm sorry for you," I told her. I got out of her reach first.

"If you weren't a girl you wouldn't dare to hit us," Tomlin growled. He has no big sisters, so he thought more of it than I did. "Or McCarthy either if he wasn't a professor. He is a sneak: and so are you."

She turned her head away and rubbed her face with her handkerchief. I believe it was her eyes. Girls are like that.

"No," she said, "I am not a sneak. You have hurt me more than I have hurt you; but I shall not tell any one. You would better go. If you are not sneaks you will oblige me by not mentioning it at the school."

We'd rather have told and had the laugh on him, and stood a licking for it; but you can't argue with a girl when she snivels. So we promised not to tell. We started to go, but she put her handkerchief away and called us back.

"I am sorry I struck you," she said, "because you couldn't strike back. You may if you like."



DRAWN BY MAGINEL WRIGHT ENRIGHT

"We took his trousers and shoes and spectacles and coat."

We couldn't help laughing at that. "I shouldn't like to, thank you," I told her.

"Of course not," Tomlin said. "It's all right."

She drew a long breath. I think they call them sighs.

"It wasn't the—the joke that annoyed

me so," she said. "It was—I am *sure* Professor McCarthy isn't a sneak. If you were to go and give him back his clothes——"

"No fear!" we both said at once.

"You don't know him like we do," Tomlin assured her.

"But what am I to do?" she asked.

"I can't let him be left like that."

"Then why don't you—" she blazed up again, so I altered what I was going to say—"Why don't you—send some one?"

"I suppose I can send the gardener," she said. "Well, good-bye. It is quite a mistake, the idea that you have got in your head about Professor McCarthy. He is very earnest about his work; and perhaps he may be a little severe; but I expect you are tiresome, aren't you?"

"Rather!" I said.

"You bet we are!" said Tomlin.

"Then try not to, but you're sure to be, of course. All nice boys are. But try to be fair to Professor McCarthy and see the good points in him. Perhaps you will come and talk to me again some other afternoon. My name is Granet, and I am governess to the little children here. Good bye, boys."

"Good-bye, Miss Granet," I said. "You're all right."

"We'll try to be fair," Tomlin said, "but he won't."

Then we shook hands with her and went. We thought she was "O. K." and awfully strong in the arm.

The Sneak came in about half an hour after us. "Clothed, but not in his right mind," Tomlin whispered. He was in a rage. Any one could see it.

He kept in a rage for several days; but it was the quiet sort. He didn't stamp or shout, but sneered at the little mistakes and made you feel small, and kept you in for the big ones. We didn't mind that. A fellow must expect to get it in the neck when he's done anything. On Tuesday afternoon he had a decent fit and praised Boyle's Latin prose.

"This is really good, Boyle," he said. "If you would let me help you as much as I wish to, you'd make a scholar."

Boyle had a silly fit too, and went red. "Yes, sir," he said. "I'll try to, in future."

He had the cheek to tell us after school that he believed the Sneak meant well, and would be all right if we let him alone.

On Wednesday Tomlin had some money from his aunt, and paid me back what he owed me. We bought a box of

candy between us, and took it up to Miss Granet to show we didn't bear malice.

We met her in the drive. She was looking frightfully glum; but she smiled a little when we gave her the candy. It was real good of us, she said, and she liked candy. "And I like you, too," she said, "my dear boys."

It made us feel rather silly when she said that, and Tomlin got confused, and said, "Nicely, thank you!"

"He hasn't been such a sneak this week," I told her. "We thought you'd like to know," but she only sighed.

"I am afraid I have altered my opinion of Professor McCarthy," she said. "The gardener is a very silly old man, and Professor McCarthy frightened him; and he mentioned me. Professor McCarthy was so absurd as to connect me with the—the joke; and he wrote me a letter; a very—" she considered to get the right word—"a very ill-advised letter. Please do not mention to any one that I said we were engaged."

"You don't mean to say he's given you up?" I asked.

"It was I who did the giving up; but he forced me to do so, by his letter."

"Then he is a sneak," I told her.

"Worse than a sneak," Tomlin said. "He's a fool!"

"I meant a foolish sneak," I explained.

She really smiled this time.

"I don't know that it is so foolish," she said; "but I am glad you think so."

She sighed again, and we felt uncomfortable.

"Do you mind?" Tomlin blurted out. He has no sense.

She went red, and tossed her head.

"Certainly not!" she said. "Not in the least. We won't talk about it any more. Come up to the house with me, and I'll ask the General if I may show you the dogs, and the rabbits and the stables."

We had a splendid time at the house, and three kinds of cake, and she was very pleasant; but she looked miserable when she thought we weren't noticing her. I knew she did mind, and so did Tomlin. It's funny how big women like little men!

We didn't talk much going back; but



DRAWN BY MAGINEL WRIGHT ENRIGHT

"We told her all about it without mentioning his name."

when we got to the gate Tomlin slapped me on the shoulder.

"Good old Johnson!" he said. I knew what he meant.

"I'll own up, Tommy," I proposed. "It's no use both getting in a row."

"I meant I'd own up," he said. "I proposed it."

"Rats!" I told him; but he was pig-headed, and said he should go to the Sneak whether I did or didn't. I wasn't pig-headed like he was; but I said I should go, if he went. So we went together.

He was sitting at his table correcting exercises, and he looked very fierce when he saw us.

"What is it?" he growled. He did not speak in an encouraging manner.

"Miss Granet didn't hide your things," I said. "We did. She caught us when we were running away and tried to get you out of the mess without telling on us. Shall we go to the principal now, or to-morrow?"

The Sneak upset the ink-pot and stared at us.

"Say that again," he roared.

I said it again, and this time I remembered to mention that she had made us promise not to tell the school. Then he wiped up the mess and changed his coat.

"I'll take you to the principal now," he said. So we followed him along the passage, making faces at his back.

The principal was correcting exercises too. He didn't look particularly pleased when he saw us; and he frowned while the Sneak cleared his throat.

"I have previously reported these boys to you, sir, on several occasions," he said. "In this instance I wish to report that, under trying circumstances, they have behaved in an exceedingly honorable manner. I should prefer not to enter into details, as there are points upon which I cannot quite excuse them, or myself; but they need not be afraid to tell you if they wish. Their recent behavior has made full amends for their—for what they considered a—a joke."

The principal looked at us all for nearly half a minute. Then he nodded slowly.



DRAWN BY MAGNET WRIGHT ENRIGHT

"So we all shook hands."

"Do you wish to say anything, Johnson?" he asked.

"No, sir," I said.

"Do you wish to say anything, Tomlin?"

Tomlin hesitated. I thought he was going to give us all away, and nudged him to shut up; but he had sense for once.

"Yes, sir," he said. "I—I think Professor McCarthy has acted awfully well, too."

"I meant that, too, sir," I explained. The principal stood up with his spec-

tacles pushed back on his forehead, and his hands beneath his coat-tails, and beamed.

"Then," he said, "I suggest that you and Professor McCarthy shake hands. Come! Let's all shake hands!"

So we all shook hands; the principal and Tomlin, and I, and the Sneak!

We don't consider now that he is a Sneak really; and the name doesn't stick to him. Miss Granet kissed us because we told her how we'd punched the habit out of some of the boys.

The Real Thing in Gold Bricks

BY BAILEY MILLARD

The tug boat *Alert* lay-to just outside the Golden Gate, rolling easily on an oily sea in the lazy afternoon sunshine. Astern, beyond where the tide-rip battled above the bar, was a yellow bay and a bristle of masts. A great fluffy pile of white clouds hovered serenely overhead. Forward spread the thrilling infinity of the greatest of seas, an expansive foreground for the imagination, broken only by a few trivial details—the gray Farallon Isles and a long, low smudge of smoke that blurred the western skyline.

"If that's the *Baltimore*," said Sam Inkersby, the oldest of the five reporters aboard the tug and the Man Who Knew Things, "we'll have the pumps at work on Señor Carlos Rizeta in just about two hours." Sam was gazing at the distant smudge from where he sat on his deck stool.

"Maybe he won't talk," said Ewing. "But he knows English, that's one comfort. Of course, some of you yellow scribes will be writing him up for a Sunday story: 'My Adventures as a Political Refugee from Honduras.' It would just suit Morley Sill."

"Oh, Morley'll get his saffron hooks on the man when they lock him up in the Federal keep," said Pop Higgins. "And Jack Madden will write him up, of course, with pictures showing how the famous ref-

ugee didn't look while telling his story."

"Scoffer!" snapped Inkersby, who worked on the *Shield*, of which Morley Sill was Sunday editor. "Pop, you old dough-head, you don't know a man of genius when you see one. I tell you, Morley Sill is one of journalism's great lights, and it will come to you by and by as the joke comes to the Englishman. See the circulation he has worked up for the *Shield*."

"Ts-s-s!" sibilated Pop. "A morbid, sensational, depraved, decadent—"

"Belay there, you knocker!" cut in Inkersby. "That's the distorted view of a man without a stomach. A fellow who would be squeamish on a fishpond like this would naturally be ready to traduce a brother journalist. Don't turn pale now when I offer you this cigar. There, I knew you'd go green at the sight of it; and it's a good raw, wet Havana. Now, I say Morley's a fine fellow and as keen as they make 'em. I read copy for him for a year and I know."

"'Nough to give a man bats in the belfry," sneered Higgins.

"Yes, Morley's bright, but he overdoes it once in a while," remarked Ewing. "Remember that gold brick story? That was a tough one on Morley."

"That's the story that Dickie wrote," said Pop with nipping irony. "B. Dickie, reformed journalist."

"Oh, I don't know," said Inkersby, looking seaward to the far-away smoke drift and lighting the cigar at which Higgins had paled. "You outside chaps get prejudiced views of things. You get it all wrong, just as you do when you interview a scientist. Now, I was working with Morley Sill when that gold brick occurred."

"Weave your romance, Sam," said Pop, "but don't come it too strong. I couldn't stand Morley Sill in a high moral role, with B. Dickie, reformed journalist, hero." Pop grinned contemptuously.

The Man Who Knew Things ignored this cynical utterance. He pulled hard and long at his cigar and began:

"It was three years ago, right in the middle of a wave of the wildest Sunday freakery in the history of San Francisco journalism. Morry, as we always called him in the shop, was rather new at the Sunday desk; shoved in there by the Old Man in a fit of desperation out of the local room, because the *Trib* was getting out a Sunday paper that was going like a house afire and singeing our circulation around the edges. Morry had been sending him in a typewritten list of suggestions of Sunday stories every day that would have kept the whole staff busy for a week. That list had impressed the Old Man all right. He said the young fellow was keen as a trap, and I saw it, too, when I began to read copy for him in the Sunday room. Morry was nervous as a cat and would walk up and down his little den, his lean arms waving while he talked. But when he was evolving his ideas he just lay back in his chair, with his thin legs upon his desk smoking a big, long, black cigar. Ideas! That chap just bristled with 'em.

"But, you know, it's one thing to have ideas and another thing to get them into proper shape in cold type. That's where lots of 'em fail. But Morry had dead loads of executive ability. He seemed to fire his little staff with his own enthusiasm. He hadn't been on the job two weeks before ours was the liveliest end of the whole paper.

"Ben Dickie was Morry's right-hand man, the fellow that could do the most picturesque stunts and write them up in the smartest style. Ben was really a

consummate genius in getting up a page story, with fetching text, scare heads and startling pictures. His introductions were a wonder. In Morry's first month the circulation jumped five thousand. People just had to have the paper. Even those who were condemning it for a freak sheet bought it on the sly and read it when nobody was looking.

"Of course, the Old Man was tickled to death, though he wouldn't quite stand for all of Morry's ideas. For instance when he wanted to have Nellie Dare dress up in men's clothes and get shanghaied aboard a deep water ship and write up her experiences, the boss shook his head.

"We could have a tug and policemen to take her off at the time she would be sailing out of the bay," said Morry.

"Too risky," said the Old Man. "Remember this is a family paper."

"One thing I don't like to tell about," said the Man Who Knew Things, with a look of deprecation, "but it's a part of the story, and as Ben Dickie has quit the profession, it doesn't really matter so very much. What I refer to is Ben's girl. She was about as demure a looking damsel as ever sat in a choir, and awful pretty, with big liquid black eyes, and a regular peaches-and-cream complexion. I happened to live in the same apartment house, out in Sutter street, where she was, and met her several times. She had lived all her life with an old-maid aunt; one of those terribly advanced creatures who can explain Browning to you. Transcendental ideas? That's where you got 'em, and Puritanical ones, too. Ruth Birrell, that was the girl's name, had drunk pretty deeply from her aunt's philosophy. So that while she was engaged to Ben all right and was proud of his position as a journalist, with an opportunity to 'enlighten and reform the world,' she had to be kept in the dark about his being a Sunday freak man, or there would have been a sudden gulf between 'em as wide as that gate back there.

"Ben and I got pretty friendly as we foregathered of nights after hours over our small blacks up at the Louvre, and he confided his troubles to me. But of course, I'm not going to give them away any more

than to say that he was up a stump on the question of his occupation and all on the girl's account.

"I enter into the spirit of these ideas of Morry's" said he, 'but just in a professional way. Privately, it's mighty tough on me, particularly on Wednesday evenings when I escort Ruth and her aunt up to the Emerson Club and have to listen to the old woman's talk on the degenerating tendencies of the times all the way home, with the side lecture on the awful evils of sensational journalism. I sometimes suspect the old lady is onto me; but if she really knew for sure what my work was she'd fall down in her tracks.'

"But they'll find out sooner or later," said I. 'Better tell 'em now and have it over with. Maybe she isn't the girl for you after all.'

"He looked at me with keen reproach out of his clear, boyish blue eyes, and, of course, I had to smooth over the remark.

"I thought about telling her," said Ben to me, 'that day after my article that told

how I jumped off the ferry-boat to see how quickly they would save me. I began pointing out the article and showing her what a great public good was done by the publication of the experiences of Danny Deeever, the reporter, who was in the water fully twenty minutes before a boat was lowered to save him; how it jacked up the sleepy old ferry crews and set them to having boat drills.'

"Oh, I think it's too sensational!" said she. 'There was too much deception in it, for Danny Deeever was in no great danger. He jumped over with a buoy in his hands and a life-preserver under his overcoat. The same good could have been wrought by an editorial article on "The Necessity for Boat Drills in Our Ferry Service."'

"Which nobody would have read," said Ben, 'and the company would have been as lax and careless of human life as ever.' But he couldn't make her see it, and of course, he didn't dare to own up to being Danny Deeever.



DRAWN BY HOWARD V. BROWN

"Ideas! That chap just bristled with 'em."

"One day, though, she nearly caught him. He was rigged up like a Chinaman and carried two big vegetable baskets on a pole, so as to be able to write up back-door experiences in Oakland, when he turned a corner and nearly ran into her. She stopped short and stared hard at him, while he turned his head away, and then he heard her say, 'Oh, it can't be!' and she tripped away with that high-stepping gait of hers, that wouldn't have bent a blade of grass.

"When Ben told me about it he was half-scared to death, and he lost the story of the month, refusing to write the thing up for the *Shield* for fear she would nail him as the writer. She had just been elected secretary of the Pacific Woman's Club and it would have floored her if the terrible disclosure had been made.

"Now I come to the gold brick, and I'll tell you how we came to start that thing and just what poor Ben had to do with it. After Morry had been grinding along at the desk, laboring like a lather for six months, there came a little lull in the flux of his bright ideas. A whole lot of his schemes were turned down by the Old Man, who was beginning to think that Morry was on the wane as a star Sunday editor. Of course, all the lad needed was a turn at Monterey for a week or two, but he was too industrious to let go just then, particularly as the circulation was dropping off.

"The old man came in one day with a colored supp in his hand and asked, 'Well, Mr. Sill, what kind of a Sunday paper are you getting up for next week? This one's pretty tame.'

"'Why,' said Morry, 'I guess we'll have something good. There's the white bride who spent her honeymoon among the head-hunters of the Dyak Islands. Then I'm sending out Nellie Dare as a Salvation Army girl. And I'm thinking of letting Dickie dress up in old tramp clothes and go to all the churches and see how they receive poor men, and—'

"'Oh,' said the boss, tapping his feet on the floor in his impatient way, 'that church scheme would offend all the religious people in town and we can't afford to do that. About the white bride, that's pretty good, but you must remember that

the Dyak Islands are a long way off. What you want is local human interest. As for the Salvation Army story, I don't think people are going to sit up all night to rush to the front door the first thing in the morning to get such dead stuff as that.'

"'Well,' said Morry, not in the least discouraged, 'there's a university professor over at Berkeley—a psychological chap—who's been going around for two weeks with glasses on that make him see the world upside down, but money won't hire him to write or tell a word about his experiences. He wants the thing for an Eastern magazine article. Now we could send out Ben Dickey with glasses like that and he could bring in a first rate story—"How It Feels To See The World Upside Down For a Week."'

"He looked at the boss expectantly, and I backed him up by saying I thought it a very bright idea, which it was. But the Old Man was kind of sour that day, on account of the drop in the Sunday circulation.

"'Oh, High-Ball Johnson could write you up "How It Feels To See Double For A Week" without going outside the shop,' said the boss with a big wad of sarcasm. But there ain't any human interest in those stories—no real, live experiences. What you want is something that rings the bell with the great public, like Dickie jumping overboard from the ferryboat or Nellie Dare fainting in the streets and being taken to the Emergency Hospital. Those are the things that make a Sunday paper. Let's get Dickie in and see if he has any new schemes of his own.'

"Morry, rather reluctantly, called Ben into the office and the four of us sat there and plotted like so many Conan Doyles, Morry doing most of the talking, for he didn't want to have Dickie too prominent with the boss.

"'What's the reason,' said he, after a while, 'that Ben couldn't go all round town for a couple of weeks, without a cent in his pockets, and write up "How It Feels To Be Penniless for a Fortnight in a Great City?"'

"'Aw,' said Ben, whose tastes were rather luxurious, 'might as well make it "How It Feels to be Dead and Buried."'

"'And it sounds kind of old, anyway,'



DRAWN BY HOWARD V. BROWN

"What kind of a Sunday paper are you getting up? This one's pretty tame."

said the boss. "I think it's been done."

"Well," said Morry, "he might drop a paper-chase line of purses in the street, with a few dollars and the owner's card

in each one, and test people's honesty. How would that do?"

"Pretty fair," said the Old Man, "but you can send out almost any skate or hoopmetack to do that. Good enough

for a left-hand inside page. What you want is a first-class local feature story for Mr. Dickie—something full of human interest and brand new.'

"I knew that Morry was getting a little nervous and riled up, but he didn't show it in his manner. He was glancing over the morning paper desperately.

"'Here you are!' said he, all of a sudden. "'Another Gold-Brick man in Trouble.'" Now why couldn't we send Dickie out to buy a gold brick and—'

"'I think we've got enough of 'em right here in this office,' said the Old Man significantly, and with an unkind grin.

"'I mean to get a real, genuine gold-brick—the unalloyed article, stamped by Reeves or any big jewelry firm—and take it around and try to sell it. There's where you'd run up against people and get all kinds of brisk, live experiences. The authorities couldn't do anything with you, Ben, and you'd have a heap of fun with the country constables.'

"The Old Man sat back in his chair, pulled his mustache and looked thoughtful. 'First class idea,' he said at last. 'Make a good article. Only it would cost a couple of thousand to get a big enough brick and it might get lost, or stolen or something. Well, go ahead, anyway. Tell the cashier to have the brick made and put it in the safe until it's needed. And let Mr. Dickie give his receipt for it when he takes it out. It's a good scheme—thoroughly original—ought to make a whooping good story.'

"He went out and Morry felt good all over to get such a rare compliment.

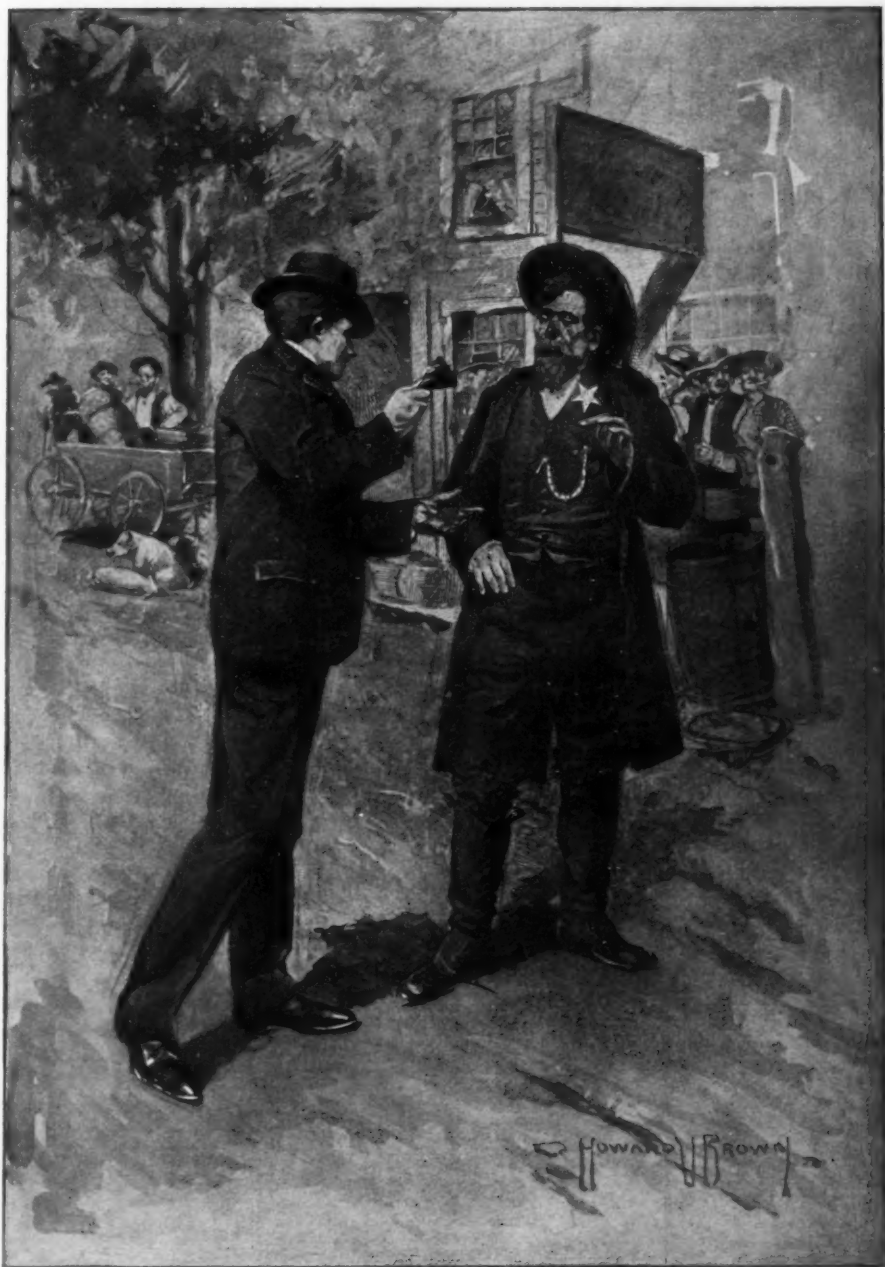
"It was a pretty looking chunk of metal—that gold brick—when I saw it lying on the cashier's desk in its little black leather, velvet-lined box—as pure and shining a specimen of California gold as I ever saw. They hadn't put an ounce of alloy in the whole ten pounds of it (it weighed somewhere near that) because Morry wanted to have all the skeptical chaps who wouldn't bite at a good thing fooled competely. The brick was to be offered at twenty or thirty dollars less than its real value. It was worth paying that much premium to make the story 'stand up,' as we called it.

"But the day before Ben was to start out to sell the brick, the news editor whisked him off to Portland where there was a big flood, and so Morry was down in the dumps and striding around the shop like mad. I never saw him so worked up over a story. He couldn't wait for Ben to come back, but sent out a chap named Putzker with the brick, to see what he could do. Putzker had just the look of a man to sell a gold brick. He had a big heavily dyed mustache and a bad gambler's eye. He would no doubt have rich experiences with the country sleuths. But he wasn't exactly safe, for we didn't know much about him. He had been all sorts of things, and his last job was interlocutor in a minstrel show. He had drifted into the local room as an extra man, and he got an assignment only once in a great while. You know the sort—frayed collar, mussy-looking clothes, weathered hat. So, of course, he had to have an escort to watch him. Tom Delaney went along in that important capacity, for Tom was safe as a bank.

"'Neither of 'em can write,' said Morry, when the office door closed behind them and the precious box, which Tom was to guard with his life. 'But you can dress up their stuff, Sam,' he said to me, 'and I guess they'll get a few snapshots out of a hundred films.'

"Well, Tom and Putzker hadn't been gone two days before a telegram came from Grass Valley, saying that the interlocutor had jumped the job and gone East, but nothing was said in his message by that square head Tom about the brick. Morry turned pale when he got the wire, and I saw his lip fall.

"'What in the name of the Great Jero-boam and the Continental Congress!' he bellowed. 'Well of all the trick asses in Sells' circus! Ring for a messenger, Sam.' He swung his arms in the air and then he sat down and scratched off a wire and sent it out hot rush by the boy who came in. Of course what he was wild to know was whether Putzker had eloped with the brick. But the operator at Grass Valley sent a 'Not delivered.—Party not in town.' And Morry had to wait another day when Tom came dawdling in, smoking a big cigar and as quiet as a dead quail.



DRAWN BY HOWARD V. BROWN

"I'll show you that it's genuine. Where is the brick?"

"Where's the brick?" gasped Morry, with a catch in his breath.

"In the safe, down in the business

office," said Delaney, without taking the cigar out of his face. "It's all right; but that chap Putzker's no good. Altogether

too leery. Tried to sell the thing to a farmer who jumped on him with both feet. Might have killed him if I hadn't pulled him off. He wouldn't try again—went and got full as a goat in a barroom there, and next day I couldn't find him; but they said he'd bought a ticket to Salt Lake. And now, Mr. Sill, if you please, I don't want anything more to do with that gold brick. I haven't slept a wink on account of it. Send somebody else next time. The responsibility is too great for me.'

"Morry motioned him out of the office. He was plumb disgusted with the idiot for bungling the detail and sending that hair-raising telegram. He waited until

Ben Dickie came back from Portland. Ben grabbed the big assignment with both hands. There was a boy with the true Sunday story impulse! He could see the significance of the thing and knew how to handle it. And I tell you, Morry was glad to see him take charge of the story.

"Now, I don't know all that happened to Ben while he was out on that assignment. He never did tell me the whole of it, but it was clear enough that the young fellow worked as conscientiously on it as he could, and didn't spare himself a single hard knock. First he went up to Woodland and then on into Glenn county, Wil-

lows and around there. He reported briefly every day. He said that nearly all the grangers shied at the word 'gold brick,' and when he did get hold of a chap who was anxious to buy, somebody always put him onto the game and it was all off. He wired that he was getting pleasant material, but nothing very striking. He intended to go over into the Sonoma Valley and then work around Hopland and Henville. A day or two passed and the next word he sent was that he was in Petaluma and that he had sold the brick. The amount he had received was \$1980, paid by a rancher two miles out of town. As for himself he was hanging around the hotel, he said, to await developments and had begun to write up his story, which, he promised, would be a 'hummer.' He sent down a bundle of films to be devel-



DRAWN BY HOWARD V. BROWN

"The brick is genuine, the real thing."

oped—pictures showing people and places where he had done his bogus grafting. 'Finest lot of human nature studies I ever got hold of,' he said at the close of his note, 'just what the Old Man wanted—human interest to beat the band—the real thing—a revelation in country character right straight through.'

"Hurray!" said Morry, throwing the letter over to me. 'There's a story to advertise. Bob!' he called to the boy, 'go and get these films developed right away.' Then he danced around the shop; but the dance didn't last long, for in came a messenger with a telegram from Petaluma:

In jail here charged with felony. Send somebody up right away to square this thing.

B. Dickie.

"Whew!" cried Morry, laying down the telegram. 'But that's all right. You'd better go up, Sam. I'll read the rest of that batch of copy. You explain things to those lunkhead farmers and get him out. It's a good thing it happened after all. Make a fine climax for the story.'

"When I got up to Petaluma I went straight to the jail and there, looking through the bars of his cell, was Ben, pale as paper.

"Who do you suppose I sold that brick to?" he asked, breathing out the question like an engine. 'I've just found out.'

"Can't guess. Who was it?" said I.

"Her uncle?"

"Whose uncle?" I asked.

"Ruth's!"

"You don't say!" I cried.

"Yes, I do say; and worse yet—she's at the old man's house—Stephen Dibble is his name. He's a big poultry raiser and a highly respected man in these parts. Elder in the church and all that. And still worse—her aunt—I mean her city aunt—that terrible woman—is there, too. They came up last Tuesday, but I didn't know it—didn't dream of it—or a million dollars wouldn't have brought me to this section on such an errand.'

"Do they know who you are?"

"That's it—that's just it—do they know?"

"There was a world of doubt in his tone. 'But they're bound to know,' he went on. 'They're coming into town and

going to be at the preliminary examination. What in heaven's name shall I do?"

"Leave it all to me, Ben," said I. 'I'll see you through. The brick's a genuine one. It's the real thing. You are perfectly innocent of any attempt to defraud the old gentleman, and it's all right. I'll go at once and explain to the authorities.'

"But," he began, "I—"

"I waved my hand and left the jail. To the deputy sheriff who had made the arrest I told the whole story.

"And you call that newspaper enterprise?" said the deputy, chapfallen over the loss of his gold-brick swindler. 'I call it a gol-darned nuisance—to stir up a whole community this way, with your fool tricks. What did you pick this here place out for to try your game on? Did you think we was the jayest town on the map?"

"No; oh, no," said I, in a mollifying way—"it was just a chance."

"I s'pose so," he sneered. 'You city fellers—And you expect me to release my prisoner on your word, eh?"

"Oh, no," said I.

"What on, then?"

"On the evidence of the gold brick. I'll get a jeweler to bore clear through it in half a dozen different places, and show you that it's genuine. Where is the brick?"

"At Mr. Dibble's. He'll be in with it in an hour or two, and we'll have the jeweler do the boring then."

"I wanted to hurry the thing up and get Ben out of jail. So I jumped into a buggy and drove over to Mr. Dibble's, for I couldn't wait for him to come in.

"At the ranch I saw Ruth and her aunt. The aunt flamed like natural gas when she set eyes on me.

"Mr. Inkersby," she said very seriously and with a most determined look on her face, 'when did Mr. Dickie begin this nefarious trade of his in gold bricks? Has it been since he knew my niece? Oh, to think of the disgrace, the—'

"Why, Madam," said I, seeing that they really knew, and putting up as good a play for Ben as I could, 'there's not the slightest disgrace. The brick is genuine—pure and unalloyed—the real thing.'

"Thank heaven!" rang Ruth's voice from the end of the parlor. 'I knew he couldn't do anything so dishonorable

as to sell a spurious gold brick.'

"'O, don't be so sure of what this man says,' sniffed the aunt suspiciously. 'The brick is to be tested by the jeweler. But even supposing it to be good gold, as you say, Mr. Inkersby,' she went on icily, 'What in the world was he trying to do?'

"'He'll have to tell you that himself,' said I discreetly.

"Well, in half an hour we were all back in town with Mr. Dibble—a dry little man who looked as if he hadn't been outside of the county in forty years—and the gold brick, and the jeweler and the deputy sheriff, we were all in the jeweler's little back room, sitting around a table upon which lay the black leather box.

"'I tried it myself with acid,' said the uncle to the jeweler, 'and it didn't turn color. I didn't know I was bit until Hiram Jones, the constable, told me about the game.' He took the brick out of the box. 'What do you think of it?' he asked the expert.

"'Oh, they're always good enough plate, you know,' said the jeweler, lifting the brick in his hand, 'but they're a little light when you heft 'em. This one seems a trifle under weight; but I can bore into the thing and tell you in two minutes whether it's bogus or not.'

"He picked up his tools and was about to begin, everybody, including the ladies, leaning forward eagerly.

"'Excuse me, gentlemen,' said I, 'but as the representative of Mr. Dickie, I wish to say that I think he ought to be allowed to be present when you bore into this brick. He has nothing to fear from the result. The gold is absolutely pure. Mr. Dibble has made twenty dollars by his bargain. The brick is more than eighteen carats fine. Look at Reeves's stamp on the bottom, and you'll see.'

"'It's there, all right,' said the jeweler, squinting at the stamp through his bulge-eyed monocle, 'but—'

"'Bring your man in, by all means,' said Uncle Dibble. 'Of course, if it's good gold, why it's all right and no harm done.'

"I saw Ruth blush a little when the deputy sheriff brought Ben in, and she looked at him very anxious like. He started when he saw her and I think the sight of

the aunt was like the taste of raw quinine to him. But he recovered himself and in a minute you never saw such a pretty picture of calm, confident, glowing innocence as that boy, as he stood there leaning over the table, looking at the brick or smiling around at all of them, awaiting the turning of the joke on the zealous deputy and his own quick vindication in the eyes of Ruth. I was proud of him and of his easy bearing, and I was feeling pretty good myself as I said, 'Already now—let the test be made.'

"Everybody craned forward over the table as the jeweler began to bore. The work was rather slow as his machine was dull, but he got into the middle of the brick pretty soon, and the shining grains that fell from his bit were just as bright inside as out, and all of the same color.

"Then he scraped up some of the inside borings and dumped them into a little glass graduate and reached for his acid bottle. As the neck of the open bottle was held over the graduate you could almost have heard the heart beats of the people gathered around that table. Ruth was now pale with tense anxiety, and the strain told on the old lady, too, while Uncle Dibble's hand lying on the table edge was all a quiver. But Ben—he was beaming brighter than ever. To him the game was as good as won.

"A half dozen drops of the acid trickled into the glass and the jeweler held it up in the sunlight where all could see. Instantly the borings took on a dull, heavy tone and began to turn a rusty green!

"'Just plain brass!' pronounced the jeweler. 'I guess you can all see that.'

"'Never!' cried Ben, while Ruth's head went down into her hands and her aunt stared stonily at the prisoner. 'It's good gold! It's the pure, unalloyed article. It's just as the cashier gave it to me. I tell you it's the real thing—nothing else in the world.'

"'The outside is,' said the jeweler, dropping a little acid upon the brick, 'but it isn't a very heavy plate—only about a thirty-second of an inch.' He made other borings and other tests. They all showed the same thing.

"Then poor Ben started to speak, but he choked, uttered a queer little sound in

his throat and his face was pitiably pale, with a cast of green, something like that of the stuff in the glass.

"A light broke on me. Putzker! He had changed the brick, forged the stamp and passed the bogus thing onto that gump Delaney, who had brought it to the *Shield* office in the identical black leather box it had gone away in.

"So then I jumped in and I made the talk of my life—a sort of Single-Speech Hamilton effort—telling them all about it and convincing everybody but that dough-headed deputy, who wouldn't let Dickie go until I had seen the District Attorney. Wasn't I glad when I found the District Attorney knew the Old Man and was friendly to the paper? But the boss had to go up to Petaluma himself and square the thing. The astute official wanted a definite promise of future political support before he would drop the affair. I expected an explosion, but the Old Man stood pat for Ben and didn't blame him a bit. He gave Uncle Dibble back his coin without a murmur. It was something mighty fine to see—the cool, business-like way that he dropped that two thousand dollars. For, of course, the whole brick was a clean loss to him.

"Fortunes of war and Sunday journalism," said he.

"But Morry had to go in on the carpet and take a good strong dose of medicine for letting such a man as Putzker out on such a detail, and, of course, Tom De-

laney had to hunt another job, though the poor dupe was innocent enough.

"And Ben? Of course his story never ran. And in order to square things with Ruth and the aunt—which took a lot of tall talking on his part—he had to leave the newspaper ring altogether. Now he's assistant teller in the West Coast National Bank; but they're not to be married until next November. It's the aunt's work—that prolonged engagement—she's a little afraid of Dickie yet."

"Oh, she needn't be—he's as steady as a church," said Ewing. "But, gentlemen, I just heard the captain say it's the *Baltimore*, sure enough."

All eyes ranged seaward to where the lines of the far-away vessel, bearing in to them the object of their quest, were growing visibly. The tug's engine began to pulse. She dipped her nose in a wash of white water and headed straight for the oncoming craft.

"Supposing that refugee is sealed up tight and won't talk," remarked Pop Higgins. "What are you going to do?"

"Pry him open—make him talk," said the Man Who Knew Things, with inflexible face, his steely eyes staring hard ahead. "You don't suppose I got up at the unholy hour of six this morning to come out here on an old junk like this just to give my respiratory organs the benefit of this balmy sea air, do you? Not in a thousand years."

Wilfred and His Grandmother

BY ANNE WARNER

I never shall forget my first sight of Wilfred and his grandmother.

It was on the beach of Rocabey and the tide was out—away, 'way out. That wonderful mile of wonderful sand was covered with people walking, riding, bicycling, and just in front of where I had paused, men playing polo. A steamer was putting out for Jersey beyond, the walls and chimneys of St. Malo stood out clear against the western sky, and to my

right the long horn of the diked bank curved slowly east and north and so on out of sight.

My eyes wandering idly here and there over sunset, polo ponies, and the miscellaneous crowd, were suddenly and irresistibly attracted towards a small boy and an old lady who emerged therefrom and came leisurely along towards me. Never shall I forget my first impression of the pair nor my intense momentary interest

even though I saw them but for a few seconds and never expected to see them again.

Wilfred was about eight years old. He was clad in what must have been immaculate white within an hour's time, and he bore his hat in his hand. The hat was a large straw with wide, white silk ribbons and the ribbons trailed on the wet sand so that they were muddy and draggled beyond description. The edge of the brim was also muddy and that portion of Wilfred which in moments of complete relaxation would naturally come in contact with Mother Earth had evidently been sat upon freely and without thought until the white suit was what nursery maids call a "sight!"

Wilfred's grandmother might have been expected to have appeared distressed under these circumstances but Wilfred's grandmother, even at that first glance, struck me as a thing apart, most utterly apart. She was perhaps sixty and most pleasant and placid to behold. She had her bonnet slightly over one ear and her right hand trailed her parasol behind her, while her left made hardly any pretense towards holding up her silk and flowing dress from off the sand. Her gaze, like Wilfred's, was directed towards the polo playing, and whether she accidentally trod on his hat ribbons, or whether he accidentally fell over her parasol, neither ever for a second ceased to gaze on with the same delicious absent-mindedness, the same happy-go-luckyness.

And so wandering, they wandered on and on down towards St. Malo, and I, watching them out of sight, watched and wondered myself, and then forgot them for twelve years' time.

Our next *rencontre* was at Oxford whither I had gone to witness a nephew row in the Eights. The first division was over and my party were being leisurely poled towards the Haven of Tea when my attention was suddenly drawn towards an approaching punt which bore a most uncommon couple. The lady was all of seventy, and so stout that the other end of the punt kept lifting itself out of the water like the nose of some inquiring fish. She wore a large shade hat, and it had been tipped this

way and that way for comfort until its dip could be determined only on the basis of some undiscovered mathematical computation. She had a large cushion at her back and one of its ruffles was in the water; also some inadvertent paddles had splashed her pretty freely in a way that the sun had not dried up. But all these minor details went for naught when one caught a glimpse of her face. Heavens, what a smile of utter beatitude was there! She was contemplating her companion who was paddling—twenty and handsome. He was paddling the very slowest way that one could paddle; he was sitting on a cushion that also trailed in the water; he had an unlit cigarette in his mouth; and in spite of the gap made by twelve years' travel, I recognized Wilfred at once.

And now I took the time to learn about them.

It wasn't a very remarkable story. It seemed that the boy had been practically born an orphan and that he and his grandmother had early developed a complete congeniality. Money being plentiful they had traveled all his life and as the years passed their tastes had never learned to differ.

And after that we drifted apart for eight years more.

The eight years brought me the guardianship of the most delightfully bright and energetic little maiden whom it has ever been my lot to meet. Raised by a strict mother and educated by the clock, so to speak, this dear, pretty Bettina had never known the joy of idleness or the idleness of joy until one winter a slight cough drove her to Cairo and my protection. Soon after her arrival I was called to London on business and my little ward had to be turned over for the intervening period to a very interesting Englishwoman who happened to be living there just at that time.

I was gone four months, and when I started back Bettina met me in Paris. She was not alone; she had with her Wilfred and his grandmother!

"But, Bettina!" I cried aghast.

"Now, uncle," she said, laying her cheek against mine, "don't. Now, please don't. Even if you want to say things

you mus'n't, because I love Wilfred and I shall hate you."

This logic staggered me to silence.

"You see," Bettina continued, "you are so like mamma that you can't possibly understand Wilfred or his grandmother. They are so lovely; they're so calm; they're so restful. I've been so hustled and bustled all my life that it's like heaven to be with people that are so sweet and peaceful. They don't eat breakfast till four o'clock sometimes, and Wilfred says he never yet has gotten up or gone to bed until he felt just exactly like it. When they lose things they never hunt; they just buy more, and Wilfred says he doesn't know what worry means. It's Paradise on earth, that's what it is, and whatever you say, we are going to be married in June. If you want to be horrid and not give me my money Wilfred's grandmother says I can just go around Paris and pick out what I fancy and send her the bills; and Wilfred says, if it's too hot to bother with picking out, to have a few *trousseaux* sent to the hotel and give the chambermaids what don't suit me. So there!"

Bettina paused, quite out of breath, and I tried to collect my thoroughly scattered wits.

"Wilfred says he doesn't care a damn what I spend," Wilfred's *fiancée* added after a minute.

"Did he say that?" I asked.

"Yes, but his grandmother apologized."

"My dear," I said, "that alters everything. I didn't suppose Wilfred had anything so energetic as that word to his name. If he has, it proves much, and I—"

"Yes—" Bettina inquired anxiously as I paused.

"I give my consent."

"Oh, uncle!"

Then she hugged me ecstatically and dragged me away forthwith to call on Wilfred's grandmother.

Do you know, Wilfred's grandmother and I became then and there the best of friends.

It was half past twelve and she was eating breakfast, it being one of their early rising days, and Wilfred was out in his motor looking at another motor, so we were quite cosy and informal.

I found that Bettina would be loved, petted, and cared for to the limit, and I went away to cable her mother with a well content heart.

They were married in Paris in June and went to Norway in a chartered yacht taking the grandmother with them.

That was four years ago. Now come here to the window and look over towards the Pilatus side of the garden. We have this villa for the summer, so that the baby Bettina, who was unduly energetic and screaming in London may grow calm by the Lac des Quatre Cantons. Do you see down there by the arbor, those two coming this way? It is Wilfred No. 2 and his great-grandmother. He is dragging his horse upside down; he is very placid this Wilfred No 2. And the grandmother, God bless her, is more beatific and smiling than ever.

And I am not ashamed to confess that I have learned to drag my cane instead of swinging it. Whether it is old age or force of example I cannot say, but I find it most reposeful to the nerves, and I am going to set down in black and white, right here and now, that in these days of hustle and bustle I have learned, with my dear little niece, to find thorough joy and peace in life with Wilfred and his grandmother.

On the Frisco Range

BY HARRY IRVING GREENE

We cremated our money until the odor of a burning hundred dollar bill was tiresome to our noses and then hiked hastily for the sky line. Cheyenne Red spotted a piece of an old Sunday newspaper beside the trail with the picture of an actress in fighting costume upon it, and went off his horse like a grasshopper. The state line happened to intersect that locality, so Alfalfa and I dismounted also, and sat down with our backs propped up against the state of Arizona while the rest of us pressed down hard on the territory of New Mexico. Cheyenne began to read about the scandal and gloat over it with his usual mysterious, co-respondent expression, while Alfalfa and I meditated. The Citizen's Spontaneous Conglomeration for the Upboosting of the Law in Centipede county had failed to connect up with us by the vigitillionth of a cypher, and though we were still inhaling the ozone of freedom the pant of the Conglomerate's breath still blistered our colorless region. One of their bullets had clipped off Red's favorite wart and still others had reduced my trousseau to a state of ragged indecency. Alfalfa began to brag about his share in it.

"Along came a lump of lead and drilled an orifice through my ear, and within the next ten seconds three other bullets had gone through the same opening. I began to get sore and looked back at them reproachfully. Old Lee—who possesses the loan bank midway between the Wheel of Fortune, where you've got one chance in a thousand of breaking even, and the Ladies' Free Gift Society for the Purchase of Umbrellas for the Igorrotes, where you haven't—had his field piece centered upon my equator and I began to get nervous. Truth is, I owe Lee some money which I extracted from him a year ago by means of a fraudulent note ostensibly guaranteed by a mythical pair of spurious land owners, so I flattened myself along the ridgepole of my cayuse and began to fret like a phonograph in its initial convulsion. Of course you know that Old Lee is the best

wing shot that was ever spawned in the desert, and when I noticed that he had the correct elevation I began to wonder what my number would be on his gun butt. Then I started in to pray, but scarcely had I got the "Dear Sir" formulated than along came the first bullet. It struck me on the hip pocket, scattered the contents of my wallet all over the trail, ricocheted upward, clipped off my watch chain and let my ticker fall in the dust and then knocked the diamond out of my crape necktie. Say, that was surely an avaricious bullet. When I looked back again there was Lee down on his benders in the alkali grabbing up assets with ten digits as he mentally calculated how much interest he'd lose before he could get back to town and invest it in chattel mortgages. Curse him foully and pass me the religious column of that paper."

Red got on his feet and stood glaring at us. "What do you think of that!" he exclaimed huskily as he jabbed his finger through the paper. "A masked lady road agent held up the Los Lentes stage last week and got away with seven hundred dollars and four columns of advertising. The stage was bedecked by a bouquet of eastern dudes and she plucked them to their pinfeathers." Red's eyes got glassy and he began to pant like a hoisting engine. "Imagine a lot of he-human bipeds playing thumbs-up at the end of a pair of curling tongs and anteing their pin money into a Charlotte Corday bonnet at the command of a mere skirt swisher! It's an insult to mankind and I'll be hanged if I stand for it."

Red had been out of sorts with Alfalfa for the past week and now he made a sudden kick at his chin as he addressed him personally. Alfalfa saw it coming, caught him by the heel and jiu-jitsued him hard as he picked up the dropped thread of conversation. "But what could a man do should such an occurrence happen? He couldn't shoot 'er, could he?"

"I could," yelled Red, still horizontal. "I'd shoot my grandmother under similiar

circumstances." He sat up and began pounding on a rock with the butt of his weapon as he clogged the air with vocal hieroglyphics. Alfalfa looked at him disgustingly.

"No man has firmer bed rock convictions of the perogatives of the cocktail sex than myself," he replied. "But for all of that I believe that woman is entitled to her full ten percentage of the sum total of human privileges. And I'd like to meet the degenerate in a six foot ring that would even remotely contemplate bringing sudden fatality upon the possible step-mother of his children."

"But suppose she happened to get the drop on you," I inquired as Alfalfa subsided.

"Then," said he, "I'd quail her with my eye. But I suppose you'd try to make love to her and lose out the same as always." Alfalfa despises me because I am a gentleman by breeding and instinct, while he is of questionable lineage and depraved preferences.

Presently Cheyenne began again. "Here I am busted once more; so dry that my diaphragm rattles against my aesophagus, and perforated by bullets until my skin won't hold my good intentions. Yet on the other side of these mountains lurks a person with seven hundred dollars in her shaw-knit savings bank, all of which was accumulated by ten minutes of industry and a working familiarity with human nature. I hate false modesty. I'm going back to Telluride and hold up the Wheel of Fortune. And now what do you say to the proposal?"

The audacity of the proposition hobbled our tongues and left us mental paralytics. There we were, with the breath of the vigilance committee still hot on our lumbar regions and

that under sized runt wanting to go back and pin insults on its chest measurement. But Alfalfa began to snicker.

"Sure thing," said he. "They'll have their spurs off and their feet up on the faro table inventing excuses for their rotten shooting. Ten to one their guns will be empty mockeries and their ponies hobbled out in the truck garden of the poundmaster. All we will have to do is couchee-couchee in upon them, lasso the bank roll, and vanish through the door marked 'Exit' in howling disorder. With ordinary luck we will have blended with the horizon before they get through the first stanza of their preliminary cussing. What do you say to it, Cupid?"

So there it was again, those two common thieves insulting me, erstwhile proprietor of the "Poodle Dog" and ex-son of a minister, with their indecent proposals.



DRAWN BY WALTER J. ENRIGHT

"Alfalfa began to brag."

"Sure thing," said I. "I was just about to suggest it."

The sun went out of sight down a gap in the mountains like a red chip dropped from a slot in the table and we climbed into our saddles and took to the trail. Slowly we wended our way back along the top edge of the perpendicular scenery and as the midnight curfew rang in our ears we passed the thirteenth and last saloon of the city and stopped on the site of the proposed meeting house. In front of us the Wheel of Fortune blazed resplendent in the glare of a two candle power street light, and liquid profanity came rippling sweetly to our ears from the direction of the faro table. Reverentially Alfalfa and I stood before it while Red added up the congregation within, each eye at a bullet hole. Then we stepped deferentially inside and unmasked our batteries.

Ethnology is a grand science and may be dabbled in with profit, but the true place to study race characteristics is from the butt end of a forty-four. Amster Dam was misdealing at the faro layout and at Red's first yap up rose his hands like a pair of soda biscuits as he stared at us, loose jawed and foolish. Impossible Kelly was in the look-out lean-to and no sooner had we got within the door than he politely tendered us the key to the city as his hand gently wandered towards the regions of his hip pocket. By prior arrangement Impossible had been delegated to Alfalfa, and Alf wished him the compliments of the season as he shot off both his trigger fingers. Lee sat at the foot of the table with a bushel of silver heaped before him, and he managed to swallow ten dollars in small change before I got him focused to a dead center. Then a great quiet fell upon the assemblage as I addressed them respectfully.

"Hands up, you Siwash-featured, frog-eyed sons of tapeworms. Back hard into that corner in a solid bunch and 'whoa' until further orders. And the first horned toad of you that makes a false pass with even so much as his eye lashes will be interred tomorrow with rag-time music and befitting orgies. Now, soo-keecheechee, you shorthorns."

Back into obscurity they went in a bun-

dle, gritting their teeth as their chilblains were trampled through their understandings and clinched by the sole leather. Lee's hands were grabbing at the ceiling and he began to snap his fingers, but I only looked at him coldly.

"No," said I, "you've got a lesson to learn, and you can't go out until recess." Alfalfa backed Impossible in front of the roulette table and took his own place behind it.

"This here is no common robbery, and I want you so to understand it. All you have got to do is to beat that trained spindle of yours and you may keep your bank roll in welcome. But I'm going to make you buck your own game just to see how you like it; so how much are you down for?"

"Five dollars," said Impossible, turning white about the gills. But Alfalfa laughed scornfully.

"I'm a frenzied finance speculator and seldom think in less than nine figures. But on this occasion I'll let you down easy and we'll play for lunch money. So call it a thousand. So now, what is your number?"

Impossible looked up with the whites of his eyes gleaming like new silver dollars. "Double O" said he, and Alfalfa smiled as he started the ball rolling.

Say, it was funny to see Kelly frothing at the mouth and going broke a thousand at a clip against his own brace game. You could have husked his voice like an ear of corn, and his adjectives smelled as if they had been borrowed from a dead language. Red had Amster Dam backed in a corner and was feeding him plain fare on white chips as if they had been oyster crackers.

"Eat your breakfast food, you obstinate carrion," he jawed as Dutch balked at the fourth order. "Stuff yourself, you jewel mounted, burglar proof safety deposit vault." He jammed another celluloid wafer down his thorax at the muzzle of his field piece and then began feeding him the blues worth two dollars apiece for dessert. You could have heard Dutch holler for over a mile.

My gun fluctuated for an instant and Old Optimist dived through the window back of him like a frog, pulling his gun



DRAWN BY WALTER J. ENRIGHT

"Red got on his feet and stood glaring"

and addressing us impressively in mid transit. And with the crinkle of fractured glass my last fond hope of permanent peace was shattered and I looked after him regretfully as I made four quick successive bull's eyes on the lights and located the door in the darkness with hasty precision. But instead of standing their ground until I gave the order to retreat, that cowardly Red and Alfalfa tried to jump me like a hurdle, and the answer was that we all went reclining with the graceful dignity of the last three pins in an alley. The next instant a bucketful of canister left us eye winkerless and before those blood-thirsty wretches within could get a second crook in their forefingers we had found our cayuses in the darkness and mounted them at the most convenient locality. Speaking of myself, I lit well forward, wrapped my legs around the neck of my bronco and held onto his ears trustfully as I beseeched him for greater rapidity. Alfalfa struck far backward on his quadruped and went galloping into the murk with one hand gripping the cantle of his saddle

and the other firmly clutching the strands of his steed's final adornment, while Red landed face downward crosswise the mid section of his animal and lay there kicking appealingly at the port stirrup as he clutched at the opposite latigo strap. So away we three heroes went through the purlieus of civilization in graceful *exposé* of the art of *negligée* riding.

The sun hung over us like a red soap bubble as wan eyed and weary we shinned up the vertical landscape. Alfalfa had been adding up the bank roll since dawn blush and now boyish contentment illuminated his features as he gave us the sum total. "Forty-six hundred and thirty dollars, four diamond studs and an ear ring," he exclaimed contentedly. Thrilled with pleased delight we climbed down upon the trail prepared to divide it according to Queensberry.

"And now what's the next step?" asked Alfalfa.

"It's going to be a quickstep with me for instinct tells me they are after us al-



DRAWN BY WALTER J. ENRIGHT

"Each eye at a bullet hole.

ready," I responded promptly. "I'm tired of the desert and I'm going some place where it rains at least twice every summer. It's too monotonous out here for me and I'm going back east where it is *parvenu* to drink soup with a hose, go to a theater and see 'The Old Homestead.' I long for excitement."

"And I pant for peace and domesticity," sighed Alfalfa softly. "For forty years I've been playing solitaire, and never yet did I look into the fair countenance of the queen of clubs without feeling that we somehow were affinities. But it was only a year ago that I found that face in the flesh. She is Mercedes Maduro, the lady that shot that feller from Boston because he told her she looked like a *debutante*, and I'm going down to Matto Grosso and win her through the hypnotic influence

I have over all women." The stub end of Red's nose raised preceptibly.

"Such plans are well enough for plain people like you, but it's me to the high life for which nature intended me," he chipped in with a lorgnette expression. "I scorn things plebian, and hereafter I'll be a person of refinement. I'm going to lap up mugs of genuine beer, fumigate my apartments with a bull dog pipe like a college student and play 'seven up' with real ladies. No more Mumm's Extra Dry, Havana Perfectos, and keno for yours truly. They are pleasant amusements and only patronized by the short sports who live in hall bedrooms."

"And you'll have a dress suit, too, I suppose," sneered Alfalfa.

Red's reply came prompt and decisive.

"You bet, three of them; one each for breakfast, dinner, and supper. And, maybe, I'll have an extra one for automobiling if the dictates of fashion require it."

Try and conceive that sawed off pepper headed son of a scarlet fever microbe, with legs warped to fit the barrel of a bronco, swathed in a dress suit and perched on the hurricane deck of a gasoline projectile! Said Alfalfa:

"They'd suggest a game of bridge to you, and you with your perverted morals and warped judgment would reply, 'I'm on.' Then somebody would turn the bridge. You'd stay on top of that society pack about as long as the soda card on a Saturday evening. Besides that, despite your harness you'd still look like a cactus fed bronco at the horse show."

"No, I wouldn't," snapped Red. "Ain't waiters coming over from Europe every other day and selling those Wall street tenderfeet jug marbles for pearls out of the old family coronet? And as for subtracting my money from me except on signed vouchers, I'd love to notice somebody trying it. It is horrible to im-

agine what would occur to his or her premises. I'd—"

A cayuse with someone on it came soft footing around the gable of a boulder and the spectacle that met our visions stagnated our reasons and petrified our muscular systems. For there, balanced on the spinal column of a piebald swayback was the bandit queen of the Frisco range—the Calamity Jane of the age of broncoless carriages. Black haired, red lipped, pretty enough for anybody in her slim, panther way, she gazed at us suggestively over the sights of a mountain howitzer.

"Elevate, señors," she said with that Indian summer calmness that puts you on notice that a cyclone is rolling up its sleeves just behind the horizon. And at those

fateful words our hands soared as if we had been triplets reaching for the lone nurse bottle. So there we three man-eating desperadoes sat pawing at the air like educated poodles while she rolled a husk cigarette with one hand and struck a match on a callous on her steed's shoulder.

"Quail her," whispered Red out of the corner of his mouth, and at that Alfalfa began pumping himself up like a pneumatic tire and tried to glare. Her match went out half burned up and she stared at him in mute fascination, while one of his hands gently sought a lower altitude. Then as her weak woman's nature was on the verge of unconditional surrender she suddenly cinched herself together and we heard her eyes begin to snap.



DRAWN BY WALTER J. ENRIGHT

"Up rose his hands like a pair of soda biscuits."



DRAWN BY WALTER J. ENRIGHT

"She gazed at us suggestively, over the sights of a mountain howitzer."

"What do you mean by looking at a lady like that?" she demanded as her lips pressed together until her mouth was nothing but a red, horizontal wrinkle. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you grave robber. Lie down and roll over." Flat upon the calloused bosom of nature went Alfalfa and pinwheeled away until he brought up

with a thud against a boulder, while Red, seeing that her eyes were momentarily averted, snatched at his pistol as if it had been a free lunch sandwich. But the next second there was a sound of artillery in action and Cheyenne went skipping about as he employed crude language and counted up his remaining fingers. Of

course as usual he and Alfalfa had made a misdeal of the situation, and it was up to me again to make myself irresistible. Pityingly I smiled upon them as I put a tremulo in my voice and started to win her.

"I've been all over this world and into some parts of New England, yet never before have I been so taken by a woman," I began soulfully. "Females have thrown themselves at me in bunches only to be almost rudely kicked back into their corral, yet the instant my eyes rested upon you I was made captive. These low creatures in whose company you chance to find me are but my despised companions of the hour, and could I leave them forever and wander blissfully along life's trail in double harness with you, I'd be the happiest coyote east of Death Valley. And now is our engagement duly recorded, or must I first tame your male parent?" For a moment she looked at me palpitating and coy, then made her naïve answer.

"But which of you carries the bank roll?"

"Alfalfa there, but I'll pry it away from him or present you with his *corpus delicti*. And now shall I prospect him for you?" She nodded her assent and scrupulously I went through Alfalfa as he lay wild eyed and unmoving beneath my *fiancée's* weapon. Then with a bow I bestowed the

proceeds of my research upon her as I pleaded for one fond pressure of my lips upon her digits. For a moment she hesitated, then thrusting the barrel of her pistol in my ear she graciously consented.

"You are the one woman in the world for whom I have been searching," I said as I handed her back her fingers. She turned in her saddle with her deep eyes resting fondly upon me.

"And you are the animal I have had in mind ever since you cleaned my husband out of his month's wages last night at the Wheel of Fortune," she responded. "Now, back up against that boulder and put on your blinders while I return to him. He and I play turn and turn about, and this is his day to tend little James Edward Garcia while I rustle for the grub stake. *Adios, señors*, and know that you have the best wishes of *née* Mercedes Maduro."

Choked with emotion I watched her as she daintily blew us a farewell and blended with the perspective, her gun still upon us. Then Alfalfa sat up with a baleful light in his eyes and Red began to search for his armament as he found fault with my pedigree. Regretfully I covered them as I climbed on my horse, and then with my gun pointed backward jogged into the distance wherein my lost love and bank roll had vanished.

A Knight of the White Plume

BY JULIA TRUITT BISHOP

A whisper had gone through the town like wildfire; women had leaned over their garden fences to repeat it; had thrown on sunbonnets to "run in" on their neighbors and learn if there was any truth in the story that Nellie Blaine had been missing from her home for more than six days. Pretty Nellie Blaine! And old John Blaine left all alone in the little brown house at the end of the street. And was it sure that he had been shut up there all this time? What a reward this was for old John's upright life; old John the rigorous Christian, the truth-teller, whom no man had ever known to swerve one hair's

breadth from what was just and right in his dealings with his fellowmen!

"I b'lieve I've got a pair o' shoes that needs mendin'," said Miss Melissy Biggs. "I'll run right home and see."

Hot-foot homeward went Miss Melissy, and several minutes later, with an unsightly bundle, hastily done up in newspaper, under her arm, she was hurrying down the street towards the little brown house. A muffled sound of hammering came from within; a sound of a hammer upon leather, most like the beating of an uneasy heart. But there was a clear "Come in!" in answer to Miss Melissy's



DRAWN BY EMILE NELSON

"Nellie Blaine."

knock. The village cobbler was at his bench.

"My! What's the matter, Mr. Blaine? Been sick?" asked Miss Melissy, peering curiously at his sunken eyes.

"I haven't been sleeping good. It's so lonesome without my Nellie," said the old cobbler, withholding his hammer for a moment and gazing at her from beneath his shaggy brows. Miss Melissy gasped.

"Nellie? Why, where is Nellie?" she asked, trying to look as if she had heard nothing of Nellie's absence.

The cobbler began his hammering again.

"I've sent Nellie up to one of them sanitariums, up in the mountains," he said between blows. "She was lookin' mighty run down after she got through nursin' that Biner baby through that long sickness, and so I packed her off, a week ago tomorrer it was. She didn't want to go; she was so afraid I'd be lonesome, but I made 'er go. Her cousin John took 'er part o' the way as he was passin' through."

Miss Melissy stood in the middle of the room, much puzzled and unconsciously

clasping her bundle to her maidenly breast.

"Well, I declare! The house don't seem natural without Nellie!" she said at last, and went slowly homeward, stopping here and there to give the latest news, fresh from headquarters, to those who were at their gates waiting her coming. She was safe in the sanctuary of her own abode before she discovered that she had brought the shoes back in their newspaper wrapper.

"Well, that's twenty cents saved, anyhow," she declared to the neighbors who had followed her home, as she spitefully tossed the shoes into a closet. "What do I think? Why, I don't think. I've been living in the same town with old John Blaine all my life, and whenever he's said a thing it's been so. But it looks mighty bad."

Mrs. Summers shrugged her shoulders with general disapproval.

"But a sanitarium! Sending Nellie to a sanitarium! What in the world's the meanin' of that?" she questioned darkly. "Ain't Dr. Rivers here? Ain't he been good enough for this town for the las' forty year? Ol' man Blaine mus' 'a' been makin' money lately, that he can afford to send Nellie to a sanitarium. They say they charge like all possessed at them places. Brother Jim's wife's brother, Ned Trumbull, he sent his wife there.

"But my! He was well-to-do! And brother Jim's wife says it kep' Ned's nose to the grindstone for I don't know how long to pay for it."

Thus did the wave of talk flow back and forth through the little village, the week long, while the hammer pounded and pounded in the work room down at the little brown house. People passing by could hear the muffled heart-beat, and could see the grizzled head of the cobbler bending above his work. Sometimes he raised his head, and looking out, met curious eyes gazing in at him; and then the passer-by, looking away in confusion, would hear the cobbler singing, "Fear not, I am with thee"—it was almost always that, in the deep voice that had for years been the main stay of the Sunday services of the little church, though it was somewhat broken now.

It was Saturday evening when old John Blaine, looking out, saw the athletic figure and sunbrowned face of the young minister, Felix Forrést. The minister's hand was on the gate; he was coming in, swiftly and with purpose. He found the cobbler busy clearing up the litter of his week's work.

"Mr. Blaine, what is this they tell me about Nellie having gone away?" the young man demanded. He was pale beneath the tan which he had won in his summer's jaunts.

"Oh! you heerd about it?" said the cobbler, composedly hanging up his leather apron on its allotted nail. "I was thinkin' of goin' over an' tellin' you about it this evening, soon's I got through work. I heerd yistidday that you'd got back from your walking expedition."

The cobbler knelt down on the floor to gather up the scraps that were large enough to be worth saving. The minister was looking at the back of his grizzled head with a frown.

"But why should she have gone so suddenly? I don't understand. And I should think Nellie would have sent me some message, some little word, before taking so important a step as that, considering how we have worked together all these months."

He found his speech trailing off inanely under the light of the eyes that gleamed straight and steady into his. Old John Blaine laughed grimly before he took up the broom to sweep up the smaller scraps.

"I reckon the girl can't stop to think of all the young men in the country before she gits ready to go away," he said drily.

The young minister turned and went out.

There had been guesses and conjectures around and about the village. Would old John Blaine attend church, Sunday? If he did, it would be proof pos-

itive that everything was all right. No one knew why he should not, and yet no one believed he would. But he was there. He came in a little late, and took his place in his usual pew, but the people looked at him curiously and with some compassion.

Of course it was all right, everyone acknowledged that now, but it seemed so strange not to see Nellie's bonny brown head in the place beside him, and not to hear her sweet voice in the singing. And then to see how his shabby old vest was buttoned awry, and his necktie had been put around his neck and not tied at all, as if he had not had the heart to try. Few of the congregation heard a word of the sermon; which was just as well, perhaps, for the Reverend Felix labored that day to no effect, feeling that the spirit was not with him. The moment that the congregation was dismissed there was a



DRAWN BY EMILE NELSON

"People could see the cobbler bending over his work."

rustle of skirts toward the old cobbler, who stood still and awaited their coming.

"Heard from Nellie yet?" asked Miss Melissy cheerily, while her question was silently repeated in a dozen curious faces.

"Yes, I got a letter." The old man felt in his coat pocket, drew a letter half out, so that all might see it, and then thrust it back again. "I got a letter las' night after dark. Her cousin John was goin' through on his way to 'tend court,' an' he brung it in. She jes' wrote a line or two, to say that she got there all right and the place was mighty nice, and she liked it powerful."

They fell back from around him, and the old man went out, humming the tune of the doxology, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." They heard it after he had passed out through the gate and into the silent Sunday street. Those who looked after his bent figure, surely growing a little more bent, of late, watched it with frowns of puzzled wonder.

"I don't understand it," said one to another; and that one passed the remark on to others, "I don't understand it."

On Wednesday evening the old cobbler was among the throng in the postoffice, waiting for the distribution of the tri-weekly mail. "I'm expectin' a letter from my Nellie," he explained cheerfully to the loiterers around him; and when at last a letter was handed out to him he grasped it with a gratified smile and went off by himself to read it.

"She thinks she's improvin' a'ready," he said to the idlers around him, folding the letter and slipping it into his pocket. "The only thing that's botherin' her, she thinks I'll be lonesome. But my! I've got too much work to do to be lonesome."

After that a letter came by almost every mail, and he read it eagerly, and told the assembled townsmen what the news was. His own letters to her were mailed, he told them, when he drove up to the county seat once a week, so that she would receive them more promptly.

"I shouldn't wonder, after Nellie gets well and strong," he told his eager auditors one day, "if I don't let her go up to her aunt's, in York State, for a good long visit. She ain't never seen Nellie, my sister ain't, an' it 'ud do 'em both good."

But the day after this he met the young minister in the street; and moved by the pallor of the sun-browned face, turned and followed him home to the little study. Before the younger man had taken off his hat the hand of the cobbler was on the knob of the door.

"What's the matter with ye, boy?" he asked, with his eyes on the minister's face.

"I want to know something about Nellie," said the minister sharply. "I have endured this mystery as long as I can."

"Do you mean to speak as if there was anything wrong about my girl?" asked the old man, seeming to tower up as he straightened his bent shoulders.

"Heaven forbid! I speak anything wrong of Nellie?" cried the young man, and bent his face down upon his arms, stretched out upon the study table. John Blaine stood silent for a little while.

"An' ye loved Nellie?" he asked, in what was hardly more than a broken whisper. "Man! I didn't know! An' did ye ever tell 'er?"

"I meant to tell her when I came back," said the young man in deep despair.

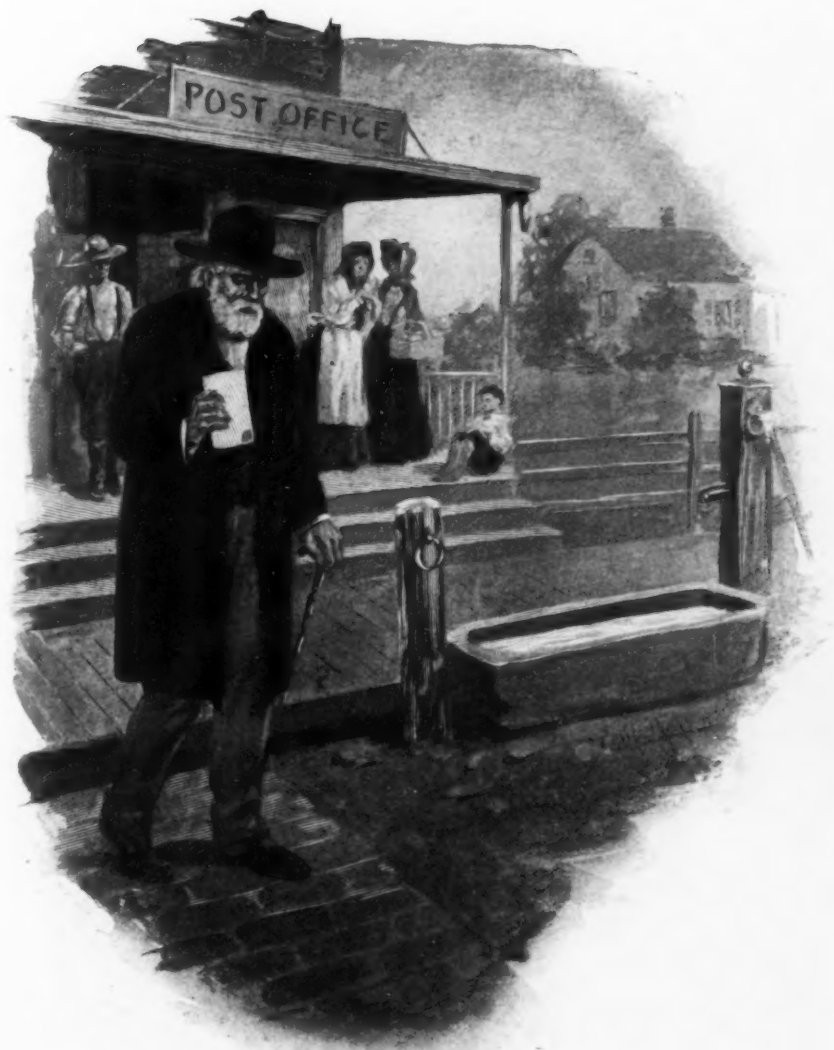
"Well, then," cried old John Blaine, slapping the broad shoulder that was nearest him, "I'll tell ye, now. She asked me in the letter I got today to say, to remember her to you, to say 'she hadn't forgot ye,' an' she'd try to write to ye before very long, soon as she felt rested enough. Now how is that, lad?"

The lad had already sprung up, his face aglow.

"Did she write that? Are you sure?" he asked, seizing the hard old hand in a mighty grasp. "But, of course, you wouldn't have told me. It is so good of you. May I write? If it's only a few lines. You can put it in with yours."

John Blaine made a motion of assent, but he did not speak; and the young man wrote. When the cobbler went away down the street he had the letter in his pocket, and walked with bent shoulders, like an old, old man.

Everyone could see that the village cobbler was changing, was growing thinner and paler; but everyone could see also that he was cheerful in season and out of



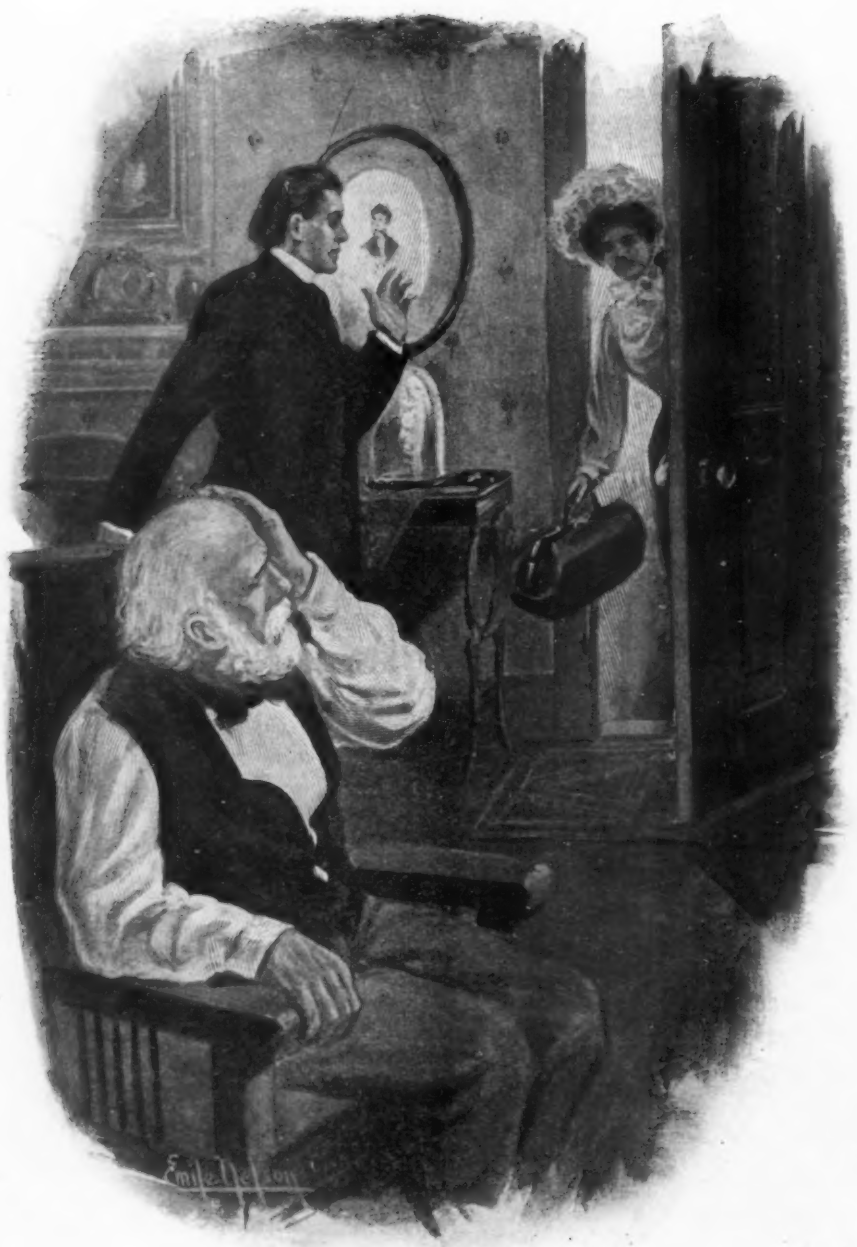
DRAWN BY EMILE NELSON

"Everyone could see that the village cobbler was changing."

season. He laughed and joked with the crowd at the postoffice; he who had always been so staid and reserved. He waited after church to gossip with his neighbors, and to tell them the latest news from Nellie, who was improving so rapidly that she was soon going to York State to pay her aunt a long visit. Never in his brightest days had the village cobbler been so cheer-

ful of speech and manner; never had he looked so old or failed so fast.

"I have brought a book around to read aloud," said the minister one evening. Perhaps he had looked deeper than the others, and was haunted by a memory of the eyes which refused to smile while the lips were obeying their master's will so readily.



DRAWN BY EMILE NELSON

"They heard the door open behind them, and turned."

The old man opened the door and admitted his visitor. He held his hand before his eyes to shield them from the light as they went together into the small sitting-room. It occurred to the minister that not an object in this room had been moved since Nellie went away.

"I'm glad ye come in," said the old man simply. "It gits a little lonesome here sometimes, 'specially at night. What was ye goin' to read?"

"I'm not going to read!" cried the young man, suddenly closing the book and throwing it down upon a chair. "I want to see Nellie, Mr. Blaine. I want you to tell me where she is, so that I can go to see her."

"She's on the road, som'er's, by now," said the old man, knocking the ashes from his half-smoked pipe. "She 'lowed to start for York state about yistiddy, an' that would fix it so's she'd be on the road. Yes, she's some'ers on the road."

He gazed intently into the empty bowl of the pipe, and the young man watched him with haggard eyes. Even while he watched, it seemed to him that he could see new lines coming into the worn old face, and his heart was torn with unrest.

"Yes," said the old man, tapping the pipe on the arm of the chair; Little Nellie's gone—to York state. I reckon it'll be some time before she'll get settled enough to write to ye; but she'll write. Oh yes, she'll write."

They heard the door open behind them and turned, and a strange, half-uncanny feeling thrilled the young minister as he saw the fresh, rosy, dimpled face that peeped in at them, laughing. The next moment Nellie—pretty Nellie Blaine, ran in and threw both arms around her father's neck.

"And how have you got on without me, you dear old Daddy?" she cried gaily, only stopping to shake hands with the minister, who was staring at her with dilated eyes. "And Cousin Em's ever so much better, father, so that I could leave her with Betty this morning and come home. But such a time as I have had! Not even time to write a line home—why, father! father—"

Before they had noticed it he had begun slipping from his chair, the light all gone from his face. The young minister took

him up in his arms and laid him on a bed, and applied such simple restoratives as he could remember. After awhile the old man looked at the girl, and his lips moved.

"Whe—where?" It was all he could say; but she understood.

"Why, father," she cried, "I told you in that note I left in the Bible—didn't you find it?—right at the place you were reading last. I knew you would open it the first thing when you came home, to read your evening chapter—that evening you were kept in town so late. You know, they sent for me. They thought Cousin Emily was dying, and I left the note in the Bible where you would find it the first thing!" A little of the rosy color had slipped out of the pretty face of the girl, chafing his hands and pressing them against her cheeks.

During the long time of agony the old cobbler had faced the village, dry-eyed, but now the tears began to come.

"I—I found ye was gone—first—and I haven't opened the Bible—since," he murmured weakly. "I 'lowed never to look into it ag'in—for you was gone—an' a body feels so about—about a girl—an' I didn't know—oh, Nellie, I didn't know!"

His speech was broken by sobs that seemed to tear his throat; but suddenly he arose, leaning his elbow on the bed.

"I reckon my chance for heaven's about gone," he cried, with hysterical laughter. "I've lied! I've lied up an' down an' acrost this town. I've wrote letters off to men about the price of leather, so's I could git the answers an' make out like they was from Nellie, an' tell people what she wrote. An' when you said you loved her, an' I seen that look on your face, I told another to comfort ye, poor lad, for I needed comfort myself, and I knowed what it was."

"Why, she ain't got no aunt in York state! She ain't never had a cousin John! I've lied an' I've lied, but I thought I was savin' the name of my girl, an' I'd 'a' tol' a thousan' lies before I'd 'a' let any man or woman—talk about—my girl—my little girl! An' I reckon, maybe, the Lord'll understand! I'm pretty tired. These three weeks 's been kind o' hard. I reckon I'll rest awhile."

When the old cobbler opened his tired

eyes again he saw that Nellie's face was hidden on the shoulder of the young minister, who, nevertheless, had a strong hand to give him as he tried to rise.

"There! You're better now," said the Reverend Felix with deepest tenderness, his eyes misty; and murmured something about a knight and a white plume, but the

old cobbler did not understand. A light had come into his face as he sat up on the side of the bed.

"Say, I must go out an' tell 'em one more," he cried exultingly. "She's played a joke on her ol' father, my girl has! She didn't go on to York state after all!"

Officially Non-Existent

BY MARY HEATON VORSE

I could not but feel that Betty Goram took an unfair advantage of her father by pouncing down on him in the Duomo and right before us all, as she did.

She came in flaps flying; she ignored, as only Betty can, that she was in an historic spot.

"My clothes," she announced, "have come. Now, you're of course going to say 'What clothes?' and I am going to say 'The clothes I sent to Paris for,' and you're going to look fearfully fierce and say, 'What! you haven't been buying more new clothes,' and then I shall say 'Mercy me I should think not! They're just those old summer duds of mine that I told you I should need and that you would leave behind,' and then you'll be so relieved that they're not new clothes that you'll quite overlook the fact, won't you, like a dear, that I sent for them without asking you if I might. It was quite for your sake I did it; to save you the trouble of an argument!" and Betty kissed her father affectionately.

Now the presence of the two ladies from the hotel, who, together with myself had accompanied Mr. Goram to view the glories of the Cathedral of Florence, would have been enough to make most men leave the field undisputed, but Mr. Goram had a backbone of his own, for he answered sternly,

"You know I told you distinctly—"

"Oh," pleaded Betty, "don't go and undo all the good I've done. Don't begin arguing now at this hour, when it's all over and the tooth, so to speak, is out."

"Your aunt," Mr. Goram interrupted,

"traveled all over the continent with only a dress suitcase."

"Do I look," said Betty plaintively, "like a person who could travel with a tooth-brush for all baggage?" She appealed to all of us.

She was exaggeratedly pretty as she stood there balancing backwards and forwards on her high-heeled shoes; it was evident, however, that it was far from Mr. Goram's intention to tell her anything of the kind, even when she held him, as now, at the point of the bayonet.

"I don't see what looks have to do with our ever-increasing pile of trunks," he said severely. I admire Mr. Goram; but see how little use a backbone is to a man when a woman has made up her mind to beguile him, for Betty put her arms around her father's neck, right there in the Duomo.

"Look at me," she commanded.

He jerked away his head. She put her hand under his square chin and turned his face toward her.

"Answer truthfully, John Goram. Do you like the way I look. 'Yes' or 'No,' she insisted.

"Yes, then," snapped the poor harassed man, and he turned his eye to the door as if he would have made his escape, fate permitting.

The two ladies strayed off to look at the picture of Sir John Hawkwood, and so out of my life. Only I stayed, fascinated. I have lately become engaged, not to Betty Goram, thank heaven, and the various ways in which woman vanquishes her primeval enemy, man, has a home interest to me.

"Listen," cajoled Betty in honeyed tones. "My clothes have come; but someone will have to get them from the custom house."

It was plainly up to Mr. Goram. He thumped the ground with his cane. "If you think," he cried, "that I'm going to break into my morning, and leave all the outside of this cathedral unfinished—it requires the closest attention to appreciate it fully—I'm not; custom house or no custom house! I told you to leave those clothes in Paris. You got them down here without consulting me; you can get them out of the custom house yourself!"

"All alone," quavered Betty. "Aunt Emmeline said—"

"I'll judge what places you'll go alone. Don't quote your aunt to me," said he, and somehow I had the feeling that in spite of appearances poor Mr. Goram had again been beguiled by woman, for though Betty said a meek, dutiful, "Very well," a smile of satisfaction lurked in the corner of her eye.

"Won't you let me have the pleasure—I began.

"Oh, not for worlds," she interrupted hastily. "Haven't you got the whole 'jeweled exterior' to do yet—I always feel myself as if it were built of those long old-fashioned poker chips—and Giotto's Tower, 'the loveliest thing in Florence,' and the Baptistery. I'm sure there are priceless treasures of art in it, homely old thing! Thank heaven, I don't have to 'do' it. Goodbye." And Betty was in a cab and away before I could protest.

"Betty Goram," thought I to myself, astutely, "is simply enchanted to get off by herself alone."

I think you will agree that what happened at lunch will show I am right.

At lunch-time Mr. Goram and I were already ensconced at our table at the *Gambrinus*, when Betty fluttered in radiant.

"I got my clothes," she announced among her dimples. "I'm so glad you didn't go, after all. It takes a woman to do business in Italy. I love this country; a smile is a real motor power. I had a charming time. Italian gentlemen do have the sweetest manners—"

"Gentlemen," snorted Mr. Goram. "Gentlemen in the custom house? What gentlemen?"

"Certainly, gentlemen in the custom house. Why not? It's only in America," she continued in her most velvet tones, "that the custom house is peopled with brutes. I wish every single one of our custom house officers had to spend a week in the custom house here as an object lesson."

"They're a pack of robbers, I'll be bound," Mr. Goram snorted with conviction.

"Robbers!" cried Betty. "You should have seen the lovely shoes and trousers and waistcoats they wore."

At which Mr. Goram groaned, "Women are all alike," a statement which seems to be a great comfort to some men, I have noticed.

"As soon as I arrived, several gentlemen," Betty pursued unruffled, "quite dashed forward, and an employée cried out that my box was wanted, and there was my box. They let me look at it, one standing on each side of me. 'A few little formalities, signorina,' they said, 'and it is yours.'"

"What made you late for lunch, then?" Mr. Goram pertinently asked.

"Because of the formalities," answered Betty sweetly. "They took two hours and a half. I've never had a more charming morning. Nobody seemed to have anything to do but to attend to me, and yet I've no doubt they accomplished a great deal. Italians are great workers."

"I should say they were; I've never been worked so much in all my life as I have here," Mr. Goram observed to me confidentially.

"The first room they went through I told them I was an American and they said they knew it; that no other country had women which deserved to be called pretty. I love," said Betty Goram, "the Italian way of paying compliments. No half-way shilly-shallying about it. And each room they went into they gave me a new compliment to be happy over. I'm sure I don't know what we did in all those rooms, for one of my friends talked to men behind books while the other entertained me. I had nothing to do but

every now and then signed my name."

"I hope you know what to," Mr. Goram exclaimed.

"Oh, dear me, no," Betty replied negligently. "I was too busy watching the home life of the Italians. It wasn't on papers, only on books I signed, anyway. By the time we got to the last room, we had got to the point when they both agreed they were coming to America to live—"

"I'd show 'em a thing or two if they came," Mr. Goram remarked with some emphasis.

"—And I was protesting I never intended to leave Italy. And all the time I was thinking, 'Oh, if Aunt Emmeline could see me now!'"

Mr. Goram looked uneasy.

"Oh, lovely spot," Betty went on, a wary eye on her father. It was a neat point to know how far one might go before Mr. Goram "took fire and blew up" as Betty had it. "Oh, custom house, lovely, cloistral structure! Blessed are the salads which grow in thy courtyard! Lovely the cat and her kittens, the hen and her chickens sheltered by thee! They had 'em you know; lettuce grew in the court and hens and chickens."

"They call that a custom house!" groaned Mr. Goram. It was evident that there was something unseemly to him, even to the point of indecorousness in the idea of a custom house which harbored poultry.

"When we got back to the place we started from they weighed my box to see that it weighed the same as it did when it left Paris, so as to show nothing had been stolen. It was all so interesting. Then when we got to the door they all came to see me off, it was exactly like a party. I had the time of my life. I just adore studying the institutions of a country when I find myself next one."

Mr. Goram grew red.

"I'm not spending either my time or money," he exploded, "in having you learn unnecessary things about superfluous Italians! The institutions of your own country are the only ones you need to know anything about! You're here to study the history of a former glorious age! You're here to see the monuments

of art and architecture! You're here to get culture!"

The storm subsided. Betty's admirable temper was not even ruffled.

"You haven't heard the worst," she remarked. "Just at the last minute the best looking one said, 'Most disturbing! The official paper, I had it in my hands two moments ago, has mislaid itself. I don't remember your exact charge, but it's about forty liras. Perhaps you lose, and perhaps I do. After all, life is all a lottery, signorina!'"

"You didn't pay," groaned Mr. Goram.

"I most certainly did," said Betty, "and before the cab had gone a hundred feet, a person in livery ran after me with the official paper asking me to pay. I showed my receipt and he begged a million pardons, and when I looked at the amount it was 40 lire 75 centesimi. My friend had lost 15 cents. Now, what do you think?"

"Let me see that paper," commanded Mr. Goram and he went over the items with the precision of the excellent business man he is.

"Aha!" he exclaimed, and there was triumph in his voice.

"What is it?" asked Betty with uneasiness.

"I suppose," he remarked dryly, "it was to save me trouble that you omitted to mention the box of hats."

Betty turned pink. "Hats! Did the hats come? I wrote Eloise to send me hats if she found two ducks. But I forgot all about them. I didn't look at my paper," she added in a meek little voice.

"1 box of clothes

"1 box of hats

is how I read this paper." There was no need for Mr. Goram to say, "I told you so," his voice was enough.

"Goody!" said Betty, the irrepressible; "back to the custom house for me. I was wondering how I was going to see them all again."

"I'll go with you," said Mr. Goram, grimly, "and we'll see whether or not I can get those hats for you in less than two hours and a half," and he looked at his daughter with a look that said, "Ask, if you dare, to go alone."

Betty dimpled sweetly. "I'm glad

you're coming. It'll be a splendid lesson for you. You watch what wonders a smile will work."

That evening I foregathered with Mr. Goram in the smoking room of the hotel.

"Did you get the hats," was what I wished to know.

Mr. Goram puffed his cigar gloomily.

"Darndest country I ever saw," he vouchsafed, by which I gathered that he had not.

"But," he continued savagely, "I'll get 'em if it takes a leg! I'll get 'em if I have to give up doing every last church in Florence; I've got 'em pretty well cleaned up already, anyhow, the best churches."

"What was the trouble?" I asked.

"Trouble!" he exploded, and the white hair of his ruddy head fairly bristled. "Trouble! The trouble's that I am not going to be bluffed by any spike-toe-shoed, tight-panted, sons o' Dagoes! They don't know who they're up against! I'll have the consul on 'em! They can't soft soap me, that's what's the trouble!"

"So the motor power of Miss Goram's smile didn't work." It was mean of me, I acknowledge, to irritate the old gentleman still further.

"Work!" he exploded again. "I should say it did. Kept 'em dancing around like jumping-jacks. I tell you, when I'm out with my daughter I like to understand what's being said to her and what's more I'm going to, by Jingo!"

"What happened?" I asked, to draw him out.

"Oh, I never saw such a country," he exclaimed, and a certain hopelessness mixed with his anger. "When I went in three of those fresh gazaboos came prancing up to us, bowing and grinning and chattering and signorinaing and signoring until, begad, I felt more like a French farce than a respectable American citizen. But I cut 'em short. I took that paper out and held up two fingers and shook at 'em, and said,

"Two boxes!" I said. "Two boxes." That took the starch out of 'em, and they didn't need any translation to understand me, though Betty of course turned on the smiles and the lingo. And as soon as she

began to talk they began capering around and bowing and jabbering. After they'd been at it ten minutes, I said, 'Cut it short, Betty. Where'd they say your box is?'

"They say they had noticed that two boxes were called for," says she. "They'd noticed it," Mr. Goram repeated in a tone of ineffable contempt.

"But because the box she'd taken away the other day weighed the required amount of pounds, they thought there must be some mistake. You see, that's their system. The goods are weighed in Paris," his love of business details led him to explain, "and then down here and the weights have got to tally. But what can you tell about these foreign weighing machines? Ten to one no two of 'em are alike. I've never yet seen a clock that hadn't a go-as-you-please way of telling time that was unlike any other clock! And if the clocks aren't right, stands to reason the scales won't be, either. I tell you, Curtis, the sooner a man makes up his mind to bury himself in the past in this country the better for him, for the present is no place for a decent man!"

"There's *two* boxes and I'll trouble you to hand out the second," I told 'em. I was as polite as they, but they could see I meant business, and I got between Betty and the yellow-shoed dago who was making eyes at her.

"He gabbled something and whipped around to the other side of me, cool as you please. 'They say,' Betty told me, smiling all the time at that insolent pup, 'they'll look for the box.'

"Tell 'em I think it's kind of them," said I pretty sarcastic. I've plenty of patience, but I can't stand everything, and I hooked Betty's arm in mine and put her next to the wall. We were walking round a sort of arcade effect that's outside the garden, and blamed if that Dago didn't drop behind and almost shove his face over Betty's shoulder!

"They want to know if we've looked for it in the postoffice or the express office," said Betty, and I just answered right out,

"Tell 'em no, nor in the morgue nor in the Etruscan Museum, and I don't mean to. I'm going to get that box of hats where they are supposed to come, and

that's right here in this early Roman ruin of a graveyard of a customhouse."

"Well, sir, the chase began. We played Hi-spy and hide-and-go-seek with that shy retiring hat box over about three acres of crypts and cloisters. Mostly in six by three ledgers was where they seemed to think was a likely place for it. Curtis, I'm not a profane man, but if I stayed long in this country, I'd need expurgating!"

"You found the hats," I asked.

"Not on your life. They took us round to the express office after a while, gambling round like spring lambs in the mint sauce, and Betty jabbering and grinning fit to make you sick—I gave up getting between her and her young man—and at last we found a lovely youth who let on the other box had come. Well I'd had just about enough. 'You find that box,' says I to them, 'and you find it pretty blame quick.' I've got my fighting blood up and when I once get it up what I say goes, by Gee!"

Two days later Mr. Goram honored me by seeking me out. His honest red face was a-beam.

"Have they found it?" I asked.

"They just telephoned me," he responded. "Seems queer they've got to a telephone—come ahead and see the place, Curtis, it's worth seeing. It'll teach you to appreciate your own country—and beside you can take care of Betty, while I give 'em hell!"

So together we proceeded to the classic custom house.

Calm brooded over the place. The official hen led her brood about, and the kittens gambolled in the sun. A soldier all but slept at the entrance.

"What a place," groaned Mr. Goram, again overcome. "What a foolish, inefficient land."

The most immaculate of officials hastened forth to greet us.

"Wouldn't you think," Betty asked her father, "that he was an old friend welcoming us to his ancestral halls?"

"They're ancestral enough," Mr. Goram growled, "and their business methods are prehistoric."

"Your hats have, I'm delighted to say,

permitted themselves to be found," said our handsome official. There was a ring of true pleasure in his voice.

Now I believe Mr. Goram has a natural distaste to all young unmarried men. I am quite sure he only suffers me around because he knows I am engaged to a most charming individual and very newly engaged at that. I fancy it was with difficulty he suppressed his desire to lay violent hands on the official who by his good looks and yellow shoes I recognized as the "impudent puppy." I could not but admire his calmness under the furious glance Mr. Goram shot at him. I should have been nervous myself.

"All that remains," continued the young man, and what he had to say almost took my breath away, "is to convince the *capo di stazioni* that your hats are here."

"Convince him that they're here," Betty echoed. "Why does he need to be convinced. They're here, aren't they?"

"There is truly here a box directed to you," the official admitted. "But the trouble is with the weight. You took with you twenty-seven kilos of merchandise which is all your paper called for; therefore, the *capo di stazioni* says that officially the box is non-existent as it weighs another two kilos. In the eyes of the government your hats are an official impossibility!"

"What's all his gabble about?" Mr. Goram inquired suspiciously.

Betty's eyes sought mine; she raised her hands helplessly.

As tactfully as I might I explained the official non-existence of those hats. Mr. Goram looked from one to the other, the perfection of it all dawned on him and together we three sank down on crates speechless with laughter.

The obliging official joined gaily in our mirth.

"This country," gasped Mr. Goram, "will be the death of me. Ask him to show me the official non-existent box. This would floor your aunt, Betty."

"However," said the young man, "have no fear for your hats, signorina. We'll win over the *capo* yet. We'll make him acknowledge the hats!"

"He says," Betty reported, "that he'll

make the government acknowledge the hats."

"A few formalities and I'll be with you," said our friend.

During the half hour we waited Mr. Goram's amusement had time to cool. By the time we were started for the railway office his irritation against Italy and against Italians and especially certain good-looking custom house officials had risen. The walk from the custom house to the station is probably the hottest and most uninteresting in Florence, and the dexterous Italian so arranged it that he and Betty walked ahead, while Mr. Goram and I followed behind.

The railway offices have none of the calm of the custom house. There is work there and noise; trains screech, and men push trucks about, and the *capo di stazioni* has none of the elegance of the custom house officials.

Betty must have realized at once that here was a man on whom smiles would have no effect. Mr. Goram regarded him with approval.

"He's the first man who looks as if he had some business in him I've seen. He's worth ten of those custom house dudes."

"He looks to me just like the kind of man who'd make a silly fuss about two extra kilos," said Betty "Oh, look, the convincing's going to begin."

And so it appeared. Our champion—the broad-minded creature who admitted the possible existence of Betty's hats—advanced on the *capo di stazioni*, paper raised in hand, his eyes flashed, and he poured forth a flood of expostulation, so steady, so rapid, that I felt the English language to be a poor thing. The *capo di stazioni* replied in kind; the air was thick with words, arms waved, eyes flashed, one felt that there might be blows any moment, while the actual existence of Betty Goram's hats hung in the balance, waiting, so to speak, the permission of the Italian government to be. The first shock of battle died down, and our friend began a plaintive *adagio* motive.

"These signori," I understood him to say, "have come down five times from Settignano."

"We've never so much as clapped a

foot in Settignano," Betty whispered to me.

"From that far-distant town, they have journeyed. What, would one let so lovely a lady come in vain? What! send them back again without her hats."

"Explain to me," said the *capo*, "the possible existence of those two kilos."

"One of those hats," extemporized our friend, "is trimmed with lace her mother gave her as a marriage present."

During this *adagio* movement the *capo* had been gathering breath. He shook the paper in our friend's face. He jumped up and down, and amid what sounded like a torrent of vituperation, the two men left the room together.

"They're going outside to have it out," cried Betty, and flew to the window. "I think they're going to fight. Did you ever see any two men wave their arms so?"

"A nation of jumping-jacks," growled Mr. Goram.

"Oh, oh, look at our man shake the paper in the *capo's* face. Oh, isn't it like the circus. Now the *capo's* shaking the paper. One's saying,

"Two boxes."

"The other's saying,

"27 kilos!"

"Visible box!"

"Non-existent kilos!"

"You make me deaf, Betty," exclaimed Mr. Goram. "One would think you were at a ball game."

"Oh," and Betty drew a regretful sigh, "they've gone out of sight altogether. Oh, father! with the very official existence of my hats hanging in the balance how can you do that?" For Mr. Goram had taken the New York Herald from his pocket and with an exasperated air began on the weather reports.

"Look," cried Betty, "our man's coming back."

He entered with a victorious air which cried for a flourish of trumpets.

"The *capo* admits the existence of your box," he announced. "Now, if you will follow me, a few little formalities and the box is yours."

Together the *capo di stazioni* awaited us, and together we wandered through several acres of rooms. Now we told one behind bars our names, ages, and natal

village, again the two extra kilos were added to books like the doomsday book, and ever and anon Betty was asked for a description of the hats, and again the kilos were added to other doomsday books, and we grew weary and the joy of life went out of us.

Finally, "I understand," said Mr. Goram in a subdued voice, "perfectly why the *capo* took the stand he did," and he mopped his brow.

"But why they didn't simply let me steal my non-existent box I cannot understand," Betty complained. Red tape had tired even her blithe spirit.

Silently we accompanied our friend back to the custom house. He disappeared within its tranquil rooms.

Then, "A thousand pardons," he said, "everyone is at lunch, but in two hours or so —"

"Betty," roared Mr. Goram, "you get some older woman—some suitable woman—to bring you. I shouldn't dare to come back here again. This is a little too much. We've been at this three hours and a half."

That night when Mr. Goram and I returned from our businesslike sight-seeing we were met by a subdued Betty.

"Did you get your hats?" her father inquired.

"Yes," said Betty in a still little voice. She retired to her room and returned with a nameless lump of straw in each hand. Bits of ribbon clung to them odds and ends of flowers and milliner's wires stuck out from them like bristles, and under this adornment the hats still kept a semblance of smartness, all the more ghastly for their general dishevelment.

Mr. Goram put on his glasses.

"What are those objects?" he inquired.

"These," replied Betty, "were my hats!"

"What have you done to 'em?" asked Mr. Goram. He took one in his hand and regarded it with the air of a dog looking at a new species of June bug.

"What have I done to them?" echoed Betty. "It isn't I, who haven't done a thing to them! Plucked bare, my dear, is what those hats have been. Every leaf and flower plucked out of them—ravished of every feather. That's what!"

A slow smile overspread Mr. Goram's face.

"They may grind slow," he observed, "but they grind finer than anything I've ever seen. What do you suppose they got on the priceless lace that young fellow lied about?"

Betty had a gesture of despair.

"When I got to the custom house this afternoon, my friend was ready for me. 'Are you in a furious hurry?' he had the nerve to ask me after all I'd been through. 'A few trifling formalities,' he said, 'and they are yours.' So we waited two hours while they trifled with some more books, and at last he gave me these. They entertained us charmingly all the while. There's no doing anything about it," she added. Mr. Goram had never seen Betty so meek. "I was so tired I forgot to open the box. I signed every paper they gave me. I signed a paper saying they were all in order and as they should be. All in order!" And Betty put one of the battered things on her head. The millinery wires bristled from it defiantly; it had a rakish mocking air.

Mr. Goram gave vent to a heartless chuckle.

"Betty," he was brutal enough to say, "I'm afraid those smiles of yours were officially non-existent!"

The Advent of Aunt Joan

BY LEIGH GORDON GILTNER

Our commanding colonel, the best of good fellows, used to delight to exploit, and I doubt not, to embellish, the eccentricities of the clever but unconventional spinster step-sister who was responsible for his upbringing, so far as such responsibility was attributable to anything save chance. The colonel's wife, who was the colonel's widow at the date of the events subsequently chronicled, evinced always a very palpable distaste for these recitals. Her disapproval of her sister-in-law was patent, though she had as a matter of fact, every reason to be grateful to her.

The colonel's mother had died when he was a lad of eight, leaving him to the care, or, rather, the neglect of a hard-riding, hard-drinking father, the proprietor of a vast but much involved Virginia estate. That the boy had not gone straightway to the bad was due wholly to his sister, though one would scarcely have attributed missionary tendencies to dashing Joan Hollister, the cleverest whip, the best shot, and the most daring cross-country rider in two counties. Handsome, brilliant, and independently rich in her own right, she was the acknowledged belle of the country side, with suitors galore, to whom she vouchsafed scant courtesy or none, and at whose sighs and protestations she laughed openly.

She freely averred that she was not at all the normal woman; that the fireside virtues had been omitted from her make-up; that she detested things domestic and disliked equally cats, canary birds, and babies; that she lacked the pliancy requisite to the "clinging vine," and had no tender yearnings to love or to be loved. Give her a good horse with the pack in cry and love might go hang! Yet as her "black mammy" was wont to assert, "Miss Joan's bark 'us wuss dan her bite," and when she found the care of a riotous younger brother devolving upon her for the simple reason that there was no one else to look after him, she did her best for the boy, and the event proved that that best was not wholly bad.

She taught him to ride, to shoot, and to dance; then realizing her limitations as an instructor of youth, secured for him, at her own expense, a capable and conscientious tutor. When at her father's death three years later, his estate was found heavily involved, she assumed simultaneously the settlement of his affairs and the charge of her brother's future, administering capably and well in both instances. She put the lad through college, and upon his declaring for a military career, moved heaven and earth to get him into West Point. In every upward step of his career it was she who had sustained and supported him.

To the adoring colonel, Joan Hollister was a paragon, though at fifty, instead of taking to caps and crocheting, she still rode to hounds with the best of them, swearing roundly, her enemies averred, when her hunter refused a leap, and drinking the M. F. H. under the table at Hunt Club functions; while for all her eccentricities and her somewhat autocratic management of the estate, which had vastly improved under her *régime*, there was scarcely a man, woman, or child in the immediate vicinity of Hollywood, the ancestral home of the Hollister's, who would not cheerfully have testified to her kindness, charity, and genuine worth.

She was the idol of the colonel; the *bête noir* of the colonel's wife. It must be admitted, however, that the latter did not allow her disapproval of her sister-in-law to prevent her acceptance of Miss Hollister's benefactions. It was doubtless due to design rather than mere chance that the sisters-in-law had never met. The colonel's wife had a holy horror of Miss Joan, who returned her aversion with unholy intensity, having gathered a pretty clear idea of that lady's character from occasional hints her brother had unguardedly let fall. They exchanged occasionally formal, courteous letters, but, by tacit consent they kept out of each other's way. Even when the colonel's body was brought home to Hollywood for the last long sleep, the

widow found herself "too much prostrated with grief" to accompany the remains, or to allow Dorothy, her only child, to leave her. So it was the sister he had loved who followed him alone to his final resting place.

After her brother's death, Miss Hollister, much to the relief of her sister-in-law, who had feared a cessation of pecuniary favors, transferred her devotion from the father to the daughter whom she had never seen. It was she who, upon Dolly's graduation from the local academy, made possible for her two years at a fashionable eastern finishing school. It was she whose munificence made Dolly's costumes the envy of all the girls of her set, and Dolly's *début* party the talk of the garrison for months.

Yet, somehow, the respective orbits of Mrs. and Miss Hollister never crossed. Miss Joan invariably declined the perfunctory invitations her sister-in-law issued from time to time. The latter, not desiring the effect upon her budding daughter of the influence of a woman whom she had pictured as slangy, "horsey," and somewhat coarse, skillfully evaded any suggestion that she should take Dolly to visit her aunt.

It was accordingly in the nature of a bolt from the blue to the colonel's widow, immersed in preparations for a large reception and dance she was giving in Dolly's honor, to receive a letter to the effect that Miss Hollister would be with her on the morning of the day appointed for the function. Dolly, who had inherited her father's admiration for Miss Joan, was enraptured. Dolly's mother was distinctly otherwise. Her prophetic soul told her that Miss Joan's coming portended trouble. She shrewdly suspected that the visit was due to certain intimations in her recent letters as to her matrimonial views for her daughter. She was positive she and Miss Joan would fail to agree in regard to the disposal of Dolly's heart and hand, a matter which she had hoped to settle without suggestion or interference from anyone, even from Dolly herself. She had singled out as the most eligible of Dolly's suitors the *blasé* scion of a wealthy eastern family, whose latest fad was a western ranch. Though he had not yet

declared himself, she regarded him as a certainty. As second choice Old Buckstone, our commandant, was thought of; he had proposed on an average of thrice a fortnight since Dolly's return from school.

I chanced to drop in that morning and Mrs. Hollister confided her difficulty to me. It was a favorite joke in the garrison that the colonel's widow had done me the honor to single me out as the colonel's successor, an "honor that I dreamed not of." I regret to chronicle that I secretly rejoiced at her discomfiture. I was fond of little Dolly, who was very like her father, and I had an idea, from what I heard of Miss Hollister, that she was not likely to allow her niece to be married out of hand, either to a wealthy young cad or to a petty military tyrant, old enough to be her father, and whose florid face and bulging eyes suggested a parboiled lobster. This simile was particularly appropriate to Colonel Buckstone, an epicure and gourmand of the most pronounced type. My personal sympathies were with young Lacy, our first lieutenant, who worshiped Dolly, and for whom I fancied Dolly cared a good deal, though her mother had lately managed to effect a rupture between them.

It happened that, as I was returning to headquarters after my perfunctory call upon Mrs. Hollister, I encountered the lieutenant, himself. He didn't appear quite so fresh and fit as usual. In fact he seemed to be allowing melancholy to "prey upon his damask cheek." At my approach he saluted, then stood at attention, looking like a statue of Despair done in bronze.

"Cheer up, my boy," I said heartily—the lad is a sort of *protegé* of mine. "I've some good news for you. Just come along to my quarters with me, will you?" He fell into step and as soon as I could get my breath—I'm growing a trifle, merely a trifle, stout of late—I proceeded. "Aunt Joan is coming! As a friend of the Hollisters you've doubtless heard of Aunt Joan and you probably know what her visit portends. It's safe to predict that fur and feathers will fly in the house of Hollister ere the week's end. It is Mrs. Hollister's opinion, in which I concur, that Miss Hollister is coming on to take a hand in



DRAWN BY HOWARD N. HEATH

"An officer in uniform burst into the room." See page 514

Miss Dolly's *affaires du cœur*. I somehow fancy she won't approve either of the candidates her sister-in-law has selected. I wish you could meet Miss Joan, Gus. I fancy she'd take kindly to you. You're not a bad sort on the whole, and while scarcely a saint, you're a paragon as compared with that *roué* Manners or Old

Buckstone." Lacey smiled a little, but speedily relapsed into gloom.

"I'm afraid I'm scarcely likely to have an opportunity to impress Miss Hollister with my charms and virtues," he returned ruefully, "in view of the fact that I've been forbidden her sister's house."

"Since when?" I queried sharply. Mrs.

Hollister had neglected to mention this fact.

"Since last month. I could have borne this edict with becoming resignation—Dame Hollister always comes in with Dolly when I call and 'fixes me with her glittering eye' till I take my leave—but the old cat—I beg your pardon, major,—has poisoned her daughter's mind against me, raking up old scores and convincing her that I'm not worthy of her notice, until she's succeeded in extracting a promise from Dolly not to meet me elsewhere or even to speak to me or to communicate with me in any way."

"I presume you've written?" I suggested.

"Repeatedly, only to have my letters returned unopened. Dolly's the colonel's own daughter, Major Carstairs, and she'll keep her word at any cost to herself, or to me. I believe she was beginning to care for me a little, major, and I feel sure if I could see her for even a few moments I could convince her that, like a certain personage, I'm less black than I'm painted; that I've straightened up and tried to be a decent fellow since I've known her; that—" he broke off abruptly. "But it's no use! The old she-dragon has made her believe me a monster of iniquity and she won't even look at me. So I suppose I've got to stand by and see her carried off by that old sinner, Buckstone, or that cursed cad, Manners, simply because they're both rich, while I'm a junior officer with nothing but my pay. Well, I won't whine, major! I know as well as Mrs. Hollister that I'm not worthy of Dolly, and I shouldn't kick if I honestly thought either of my rivals was; but you know them both, major, and you must admit that there's small choice between them."

I could not deny that he had summed up the situation correctly, but we both knew Mrs. Hollister and knowing her, felt that the one hope lay in the coming of her sister-in-law. Lacy opined that Miss Joan would be a corker if she succeeded in blocking Dame Hollister's move. Wherein, as the event proved, he was perfectly right.

It was on the night before the Hollister reception, which promised to prove the

event of the season, that, as I sat placidly smoking in my quarters, an officer in uniform burst unannounced into the room, his face so distorted with conflicting passions that I had momentary difficulty in recognizing the countenance of our regimental Adonis, Gus Lacy.

"You'll pardon me, major, I'm sure," he panted. "Fanny Fletcher sent for me just now to tell me that the old cat has checkmated us after all. By dint of persuasion, entreaty, and Heaven knows what other means, she's induced Dolly to consent to be married to Old Buckstone." I tactfully ignored this respectful reference to his superior officer. "Manners dropped out of the running, it seems," Lacy went on, with a visible effort at control, "so Mrs. Hollister decided to cinch the colonel. The engagement is to be announced at supper tomorrow night. She means to spring it as a surprise upon her sister-in-law, and thus effectually prevent any interference with her plan! Poor little Dolly is wretched. Fanny says she declared she'd rather die than marry that fat swine; but she can't summon the courage; it would take a good deal, you know, to defy her mother openly. She's hoping her aunt may interfere, but she can't count on that till she comes. Meantime, what am I to do? I can't stand by and see the girl I love sacrificed to a blanked blackguard. Oh, report me if you like. I don't care a hang! If I have to resort to violence I'll prevent it. Suggest something, major, or I'll lay myself liable to court marshal!"

An illuminative idea had dawned upon me.

"Lacy," I said slowly, "Miss Hollister changes cars at Erskine tomorrow morning and there's half an hour's wait between trains. Suppose you take my horses and buckboard, with a letter of introduction from me, drive across to Erskine and intercept her. I think she'll recall me as a friend of her brother's. State your case and enlist her sympathies before Blanche Hollister gets a chance to prejudice her against you. It's a pretty stiff jaunt, but you can leave here at midnight and by sharp driving make it in good time. What do you say?"

"Say? By Jupiter, what can I say except that you're a brick to suggest it, ma-



DRAWN BY HOWARD N. HEATH

"What selfish creatures you are. Aunt Joan hasn't been near the punch-bowl."

See page 516

jor! Its the only feasible thing I've thought of and I'll chance it, at least. I'll start at once, if you don't mind. I don't care to run any chances."

"Go ahead!" I encouraged him. "I'll look after the details. Put up a soul-stirring *spiel* and 'speak the speech trippingly on the tongue' for the time's brief and Miss Hollister is our only hope. Luck to you, lad! So long!" Almost before I had finished he was gone.

When next morning I called to pay my respects to the sister of my late colonel and was informed that Miss Hollister had been delayed but would arrive on an evening train, I felt positive that Gus had succeeded in enlisting her co-operation and things were likely to happen. I caught sight of Dolly passing through the hall and a more dejected-looking bride-elect I never beheld. I fancied that there was an appeal in the glance she gave me and I smiled and nodded as reassuringly as I might.

But when I entered the already crowded rooms that night, I saw on the instant that Dolly had braced up like the thoroughbred she was. She was positively radiant in her fresh young loveliness, as she stood beside her mother receiving the guests who had come to do her honor. I found a nook commanding a view of the receiving party, and waited with an impatience I could scarcely dissemble, the arrival of the woman who was to prove an ally or an enemy to our hopes. I say "our" hopes, advisedly; for from sheer sympathy with the unhappy lovers I had made the affair quite my own.

She came at last. In the midst of the impressive silence that followed the announcement of her name, there swept into the room the most imposing female it has ever been my pleasure to see. Tall, she must have been quite six feet, stately, straight as any soldier in our command. Her piercing dark eyes seemed the darker by contrast with her high white pompadour, and she struck me as the most majestic personage I had ever beheld. I had seen royalty, and royalty suffered by comparison. Mrs. Hollister rushed effusively forward to greet her, but she warded off the impending embrace with

a hearty handclasp, which seemed altogether more in keeping with her character than the purposeless osculation in which women habitually indulge. She greeted Dolly in exactly the same fashion, but I thought I detected more of warmth in her manner than she had displayed toward her sister-in-law, which was pardonable.

The advent of that distinguished personage, Miss Hollister, upon whose wealth and prestige Mrs. Hollister had not failed to dilate, was speedily noised about and the guests, with one accord, made haste to be presented. Every man present joined the group about her. I trust that I shall not seem unduly egotistic when I state that she promptly singled me out of the number, making room for me on the divan where she sat, and listened with most flattering attention to my remarks. Mrs. Hollister was quick to observe this and made herself objectionable by presenting her daughter's *fiancé*.

Miss Hollister greeted Buckstone with a cordiality which made my heart sink. She turned upon him the same flattering regard with which she had favored me; she listened to his inanities with precisely the same degree of interest she had bestowed upon mine; while the colonel's eyes bulged till I was sure they must start from their sockets, and his face, flushed with pride and flattered vanity, rivaled the hue of the roses with which the rooms were decorated. I was turning away in disgust, when Dolly approached, looking her prettiest, though I could detect an anxious air beneath her surface gaiety.

"Colonel Buckstone and my dear Major Carstairs," she upbraided us prettily as she advanced, "what selfish creatures you are! Aunt Joan hasn't been near the punch bowl and it has never occurred to either of you to take her. To punish you I shall leave you here"—she might have added, "together," for our dislike for each other, though tacit, was mutual—"while I have the honor of escorting her myself!" Instantly I saw through the rather transparent ruse she had employed to secure speech with her aunt, and I hastened to detain, on some clumsy pretext, the doughty colonel who had risen and was waddling after them with elephantine gallantry.

Ten minutes later, tired and bored, I sought a little room off the library where Hollister and I had been wont to smoke together in the old days and which, owing to the fact that Dolly had insisted on its being kept in exactly the comfortably chaotic state in which the colonel had left it, I knew would not be open to the general public. Here I might smoke a cigar in peace, "far from the maddening crowd" and Mrs. Hollister's machinations. But just as I touched the portiere that hung before the entrance I caught the sound of voices within, and drawing the curtain slightly aside I perceived that the occupants of the room were Miss Hollister and her niece. The former's back was towards me, but she was talking earnestly to the girl, who stood looking up at her with a startled face and wide, frightened eyes.



DRAWN BY HOWARD N. HEATH

"The occupants of the room were Miss Hollister and her niece."

My heart was heavy as I turned away. Evidently Miss Joan had failed us; had arrayed herself on the colonel's side and was probably urging the girl to submit to her mother's will.

I wandered drearily back to the drawing room, to be promptly pounced upon by Mrs. Hollister, who detained me with airy persiflage and girlish coquetties, while I sighed for my cigar and wished myself at home in dressing gown and slippers. I had just succeeded in detaching myself and was again in search of a quiet spot wherein to smoke and meditate, when a footman approached with a note for me which he said had been brought by spe-

cial messenger. The missive, which was unsigned, contained merely a request that I should come at once to Lieutenant Lacy's quarters, a request which, fearing some rashness on Lacy's part, I scarcely dared decline. Accordingly, I sent for my hat and coat and slipped away as quietly as possible.

A feminine voice answered when I tapped at Lacy's door, and a feminine replica of my late beloved commander stood before me when I entered the room. Had it not been that I had just been presented to Miss Joan Hollister in the house of her sister-in-law, I could have taken oath that this



DRAWN BY HOWARD N. HEATH

"A feminine replica of my beloved commander."

could be no other than Bob Hollister's sister. With smiling composure, she advanced to meet me, taking no apparent note of my palpable perplexity and confusion.

"Major Carstairs?" she queried sweetly. "Then I have at once to apologize for dragging you away from the festivities and to thank you for the use of your horses which brought my maid and me across

from Erskine, whence we arrived an hour or two since. Wo'n't you sit down while I explain?"

I sat down, in a state of bewilderment bordering on dementia.

"Lieutenant Lacy met me at Erskine this morning—I am Miss Hollister, of course—and prevailed upon me to aid him in preventing my niece's marriage to Colonel Buckstone, which was precisely the

thing I had crossed the continent to do. I had heard my late brother speak in no measured terms of this man whom my sister-in-law has seen fit to select for her daughter's husband, and when I received Dolly's letter disclosing the pressure being brought to bear upon her to obtain her consent, I made up my mind to put a speedy stop to the proceedings. Lieutenant Lacy's coming was opportune, as suggesting a solution of the problem with which I found myself confronted. What you wrote of him, which coincided with the judgment I formed concerning him, inclined me to regard him as an instrument in the hands of Providence.

"We were considering ways and means, when a luminous idea struck the lieutenant, an idea which my interest emboldened him to unfold. He suggested that we were of much the same height and build; that he possessed some slight degree of histrionic ability; that no one here had ever seen me; that he was not the first warrior to resort to the expedient he was about to propose; that the mighty Achilles, himself, had donned feminine garb in a less worthy cause; that—in short, that he should appear at the reception as my understudy; seek speech with Dolly, set himself right in her eyes, and suggest an immediate elopement.

"For all my years and infirmities I still relish a joke, and I had no serious objection to outwitting Blanche. I presently consented, on the sole condition that the lieutenant, in character of course, should salute his prospective mother-in-law on sight with a holy kiss. Accordingly, he managed to array himself in one of my dinner gowns, and my maid and I added the finishing touches. I think I may point with pride to my handiwork. He really made an imposing appearance, didn't he?"

"He did, indeed," I assented ruefully, thinking what fools he had made of us all.

"The ruse was successful," Miss Hollister went on. "On the pretext of showing the guest to her room for a few moments' rest and refreshment, Dolly slipped out a side entrance with the pseudo Aunt Joan, entered a waiting carriage and drove directly here, where I had the pleasure of entertaining my charming niece while her lover discarded his make-up. They are now

well on their way to Malden, where they will be married by a minister with whom I made arrangements as I came through. I hope I haven't incited the lieutenant to any infringement of military etiquette, major?" She smiled up at me so charmingly that I felt myself capable of condoning any offense, however grave, she might have instigated.

"And now," she proceeded, rising briskly, "I want you to come with me to break the news to Dolly's mother." I started, imperceptibly I hoped, but Miss Hollister's keen eye observed it. "You needn't hesitate," she reassured me; "I'll do the breaking. I've long since learned, though it seems unkind to say so, that Blanche knows no sorrow that money can not heal, and I am positive that when I offer to make adequate provision for her, as well as for Dolly, her grief at the loss of her daughter will be assuaged. Will you come?"

I went. There was nothing else to do.

It wasn't so bad, after all. I waited in the library while Miss Hollister interviewed her sister-in-law in the colonel's den. Though momentarily expecting an explosion from the earth's center, I heard only faint mutterings as of a distant storm, gradually dying away. Colonel Buckstone was presently summoned from his station near the door of the refreshment room, which he was watching with an expression positively wolfish; and I can best describe the depth of his distress at Dolly's defection by stating that he left the house without his supper.

"The jingle of the guinea," must have "helped the hurt," sustained by maternal affection, for Mrs. Hollister emerged from the seance with a blandly smiling face. I could but admire the agility of the mental acrobatics with which she adapted herself to the situation, and the skill and grace with which she wrested victory from defeat; for when supper was presently served, she rose in her place, and instead of making the expected announcement, sketched the situation in a few graphic words, presented to her assembled guests the real Miss Hollister, and asked us, one and all, to join in a health to the gallant lieutenant and his bride.

The Raid Supreme

BY ALVAH M LTON KERR

We in the dispatcher's office at Paley Fork were perhaps the most skeptical. The unreckonable "gall" of the threat made us laugh at first, a disdainful cachinnation which eventually gave way to rage and fears. But, really, who could be expected to contemplate with seriousness a "hold up" of an entire railroad by a single individual? The robbery of a train by an organized band of men was quite within the pale of the possible, though in the two cases where this had been attempted on our line it had failed. But this, surely, this last was living *operabouffe*!

President Sanborn, at the general offices in Denver, had received the first written intimation, an obviously disguised scrawl which stated succinctly and with lawless scorn of courtesy that his blankety blank railroad had been "seized" and would be held until a ransom of \$50,000 should be paid in hand to the bold and stormy-souled "seizor." This rather regal fee, which was to be paid for immunity from divers forms and degrees of threatened violence emanating from said "seizor," was to be left by the track at the base of a certain notable cleavage of stone, four miles east of the Sandrill River, in the Cradle Range.

The assurance that the money had been left at the point designated should be a white flag fastened to the headlight of a certain engine drawing a certain train on a stated date; it was also stated that the "seizor" would thwart any attempt to capture him at the specified time and place, by the employment of an agent at present unknown to science but of unexampled scope and destructiveness. The lives of officials and employees, this astounding epistle claimed, would not be taken unless necessary, but the president was assured that the road, in the event of the ransom being withheld, would be damaged far beyond the amount of money demanded, and the loss of traffic, by reason of injuries inflicted, would soon outweigh the sum conceived by the writer to be useful to his well being and happiness. The signature

at the end of the letter was euphonious, but conceivably not the writer's real name. It was "Banks Beaumont."

President Sanborn sent the letter down to Ames Burke, who was then division superintendent with his office at Paley Fork. After Burke had pondered it a moment he got up from his desk in the alcove room, and, with an expression of mingled mirth and apprehension, came out into the big room where the tables and chattering instruments of the dispatchers were. He handed the letter to Chief Manvell, who read it and passed it around. After it had been read we looked at each other and broke out laughing. Burke's face was the first to straighten into lines of seriousness. He walked over to the window and stood with his hands on his hips looking out into the yards, watching, yet not consciously, two squat bull-dog engines bucking the long lines of cars into trains ready for dispatching. Manvell spilled some Durham into the bowl of his meerschaum and tamped it unconsciously with his thumb. He also stopped laughing and looked at the unlit pipe mistily. Burke came back and stood by the chief's desk, absently twiddling his watchfob in his fingers. His strong mouth drew down in his beard oddly at the corners.

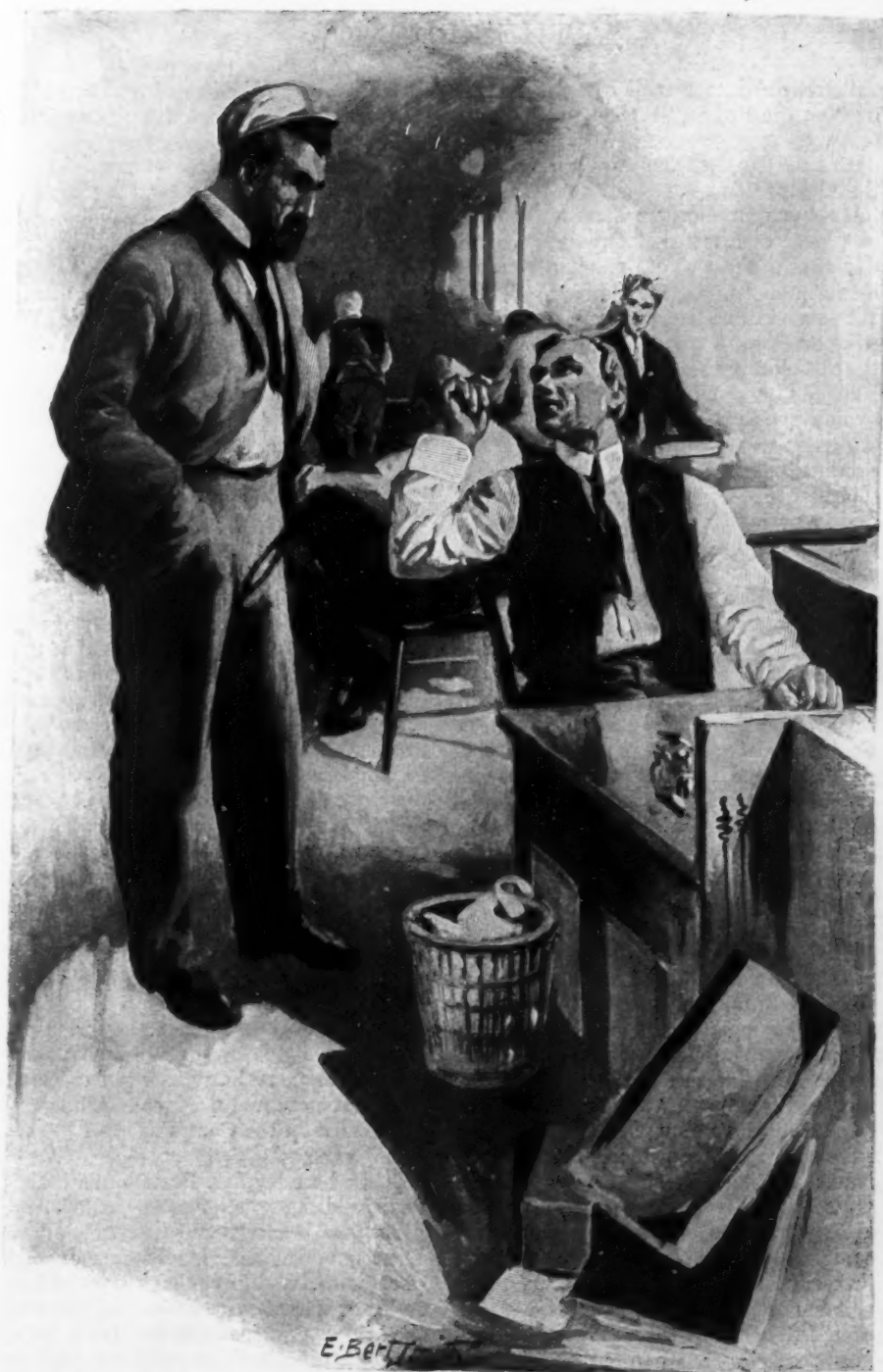
"After all, the fool might," he half sighed.

"Might," assented Manvell. He struck a match on the sole of his shoe and laid the pipe down on the desk; the flame of the match burned his fingers and he threw it down.

"If the fellow really means it and has a mind to use 'nitro' he might do a great deal of damage before we could nail him," he went on. "Looks like a bluff, though, but if not—" he lapsed into silence, staring a moment at the clicking sounder on his desk. "Sanborn, of course, wo'n't give up anything in answer to the threat?"

"Certainly not; he considers it a bluff," said Burke, and went into the alcove room.

"Where did the letter come from; what point?" Manvell called after him.



DRAWN BY EDGAR BERT SMITH

"If the fellow means it, he might do a great deal of damage.

"Dropped into a mail car at Summit, over on the Range," replied the superintendent.

But the lapse of ten days' time proved that the threat was not humor nor a fanciful aberration, but the forerunner of a pestilence of disasters. On the eleventh day after the receipt of the letter by President Sanborn, as the "seizor" of the Western Central had promised, the campaign of terror began. Tunnel No. 2, on the east side of the summit of the Cradle Range, was dynamited, blocking it for two days with debris; five days afterward the track was blown up on a dangerous curve twenty miles southwest of Denver, smashing up a freight; a week later the bridge over a creek emptying into the Sandrill near Silver Mountain was thrown off its abutments by some powerful explosive. After each one of the traffic-delaying attacks the head of the road in Denver received a scrawled epistle signed "Beaumont," saying that whenever the ransom was forthcoming the dove of peace would perch upon the rails of the Western Central and the hearts of the road's officials. Otherwise, the obtrusive supervision of the line by the "seizor" would quicken in attention and shattering virulence until the road became a trafficless cow-trail. Each one of these notes had been dropped into the letter-slot of a night-mail at some point on the East End; one of them had come from Paley Fork itself.

On all the lines of the Western Central there then came a fever. It rose in temperature from normal blood heat to the boiling point and remained there. The road's small detective force was augmented by numerous private officers; the trackwalkers were supplied with repeating rifles and instructed in methods of vigilance; a protecting engine, manned with armed guards, was sent over the East End nightly; watches were set at all important bridges. Nevertheless, a week later the protective engine itself was blown up by running over a sack of dynamite, half way up the Range from the Sandrill, and Sanborn received a letter from the ubiquitous Mr. Beaumont stating that, if the company didn't soon "give down its milk," bridge No. 18, over the Muley River, forty miles west of Paley Fork, would be

dynamited, and, following that, the twenty-eight miles of snowsheds on Muley Pass would be set on fire.

It would not be easy to picture the condition of the invisible mental side of this visible materialism that stretched its winding steel across Colorado and down into Arizona. The Western Central's official mind approached dementia. The board of directors gathered and for one hot hour debated if it really would not be wisdom's part to purchase a quiet state of mind for themselves and a disarming plentitude of things for the zealous "seizor." However, Sanborn and Burke, who were present, and "Yellow" Logan, the big blonde man from the K. P., who had done some very masterful things while the road was being constructed and was now general road-master, stepped crushingly upon this brewing cowardice.

They would consent to no penny of ransom being paid; they would see that this bland dynamiter was caught and made a human pepper-box by the aid of perforating lead, or, at least, landed in the penitentiary. As a resultant of this spinal stiffening being injected, and in view of the extreme gravity of the situation and the debasing effrontery of the "seizor," the board voted a reward of \$5,000 for the capture of the marauder. Aside from a very natural hunger to abate the supreme plague from which we were suffering, we all, also naturally, felt more vital of appetite for the "seizor's" undoing in prospect of this pretty bunch of money. The road's fever palpably increased. The odd thing, however, was that in the end an old ramshackle engine and a slender girl captured Mr. Beaumont and the lucre. The story is a classic on the Central.

Just where lay Mr. Beaumont's individual residence was, of course, a mystery; his general habitat seemed to stretch from Denver to Muley Pass, a distance of some one hundred and fifty miles along our line. A heavy guard was at once placed over the bridge that spanned the Muley and a long line of walkers patrolled the sheds on the Pass. Mr. Beaumont evidently did not find it immediately feasible to disrupt Bridge 18 or apply the torch to the snowsheds, as he had threatened, but within a

few days an explosive tore out a culvert near the Muley, and, of all surprising things, a switch engine in our yards at Paley Fork, not a hundred feet from the dispatcher's office, ran over a package of nitro-soaked guncotton precipitating a general wreck of things. No one had yet been killed outright, but several of our men were in the hospital. As might be very naturally concluded, our passenger traffic evaporated until its volume could be enumerated with something like a cipher. We were moving a little freight now and then in periods when the "seizor" and we were taking breath between shocks.

All that was definitely known of the physical aspect or appurtenances of Mr. Beaumont at that stage of the campaign was, that he apparently migrated by means of an astonishingly able horse that wore disks of rubber on its feet, and that Mr. Beaumont himself wore boots with high heels, both of which were worn away somewhat upon their outer sides and a little "turned over." Burke dryly remarked to me one day that thus far he felt sure of but one thing; that if Mr. Beaumont won the \$50,000 he would buy a new pair of high-heeled boots. Proofs of the presence of a horse with curiously shod hoofs, and a pair of "run over" but very active boots, were found at the scene of several of the explosions, printed in dirt or sand. Therefore, these came naturally to be regarded as signs and belongings of Mr. Beaumont.

Of Mr. Beaumont himself the numerous persons who were hunting him—and incidentally the \$5,000—never once saw a hair. Obviously he was beautifully familiar with all the roads and mountain-trails of that region, and it looked as if he might have constructed some secret ones of his own, possibly in the air. Whether he lived in a tree on the top of a mountain or dwelt in an unknown and unfindable cavern, somewhere in the Range, was pure conjecture. For six weeks he was a puzzling myth, so far as personal localization went, but a most amazing and fearful reality as related to his "seizure" of the railway. Sanborn's white hair seemed to grow more sparse upon his domelike head; Logan's yellow eyes got somewhat the effect of a mad-dog's, and the "groove of

concentration" between Burke's eyes deepened and elongated as the attacks thickened. Had the Western Central's long line of rails been living nerves they doubtless would have been found tied in twitching knots by reason of worry and terror.

We in the divisional headquarters had special cause to "gray and wrinkle" as time went on, for Ames Burke himself received a note from the dynamiter adjuring him at once to influence a settlement or the Paley Fork station would be erased. Yes, "erased" was the pleasing term employed. It was especially expressive to one who now remembers it, who sat there night after night trying to dispatch trains with his hair standing on end. To be sure we had guards about the station, but the guards might fall asleep and the "erasure" be suddenly accomplished, or the "seizor" might be using a flying machine, and, winging his way above the building, drop dynamite down the chimney. For these reasons, and divers others equally as hideous, the one who now remembers then wore his hat solidly pulled down on his head that he might to some degree disguise the porcupine tendency of his cranial locks.

However, that man was not Tommy Loomis, though the latter dispatched the trick from 4 o'clock P. M. until midnight; but it was Tommy Loomis' sweetheart who captured the "seizor." It may be doubted, indeed, if Tommy would have figured at all in this chronicle but for the "nerve" of Miss Ruth Patten, telegraph operator at Placer, and daughter of Amos Patten, station master at that point.

Tommy was Superintendent Burke's nephew and had "prospects." He was a son of John Loomis, one time senator and now chairman of the board of directors and the largest owner of the stock of the Western Central. Figured by the calculus of the probable, Tommy was destined to be rich, and was estimated to reach, finally, no less a position than the presidency of the road. The velvet hand of nepotism, however, had wisely been withheld from him; he was working his way and learning the business from the base up.

That he should have fallen in love with Ruth Patten, a humble "pounder of the brass," and daughter of a man who very likely had not four dollars beyond his small salary, was as vinegar both to Burke and the chairman of the board. Therefore, the "powers" had discouraged Tommy, after a fashion that was rather surgical than hypnotic; he had been ordered to proceed to Denver at the end of the month and enter upon duties under his father's eye. Some very bitter things promised to be ladled into Tommy's cup did he commit the mistake of marriage with this lowly mountain girl. None the less, Tommy had not the least notion of giving her up. Did the "powers" really know Ruth Patten, as he did, they might rave; but the raving would be of a sort barren of anger and justly florid with appreciation. That was Tommy's conviction.

As for Ruth Patten, she was, truly, very nice. Tommy, when he was with her, always had a sense as of the presence of wild flowers. Her plain, clean, mountain-aired clothes, her slenderness and delicate pink coloring, her shy, sweet demureness with him, made him think always of some outdoor thing he had seen somewhere, probably wild roses. Though since her fifteenth year, she was now nineteen, she had lived among the tumbled billows of the Range in the little station with her widower father, she was not without culture. She had known books and music in Denver in the days before her father failed and fell to the small offices of the station at Placer. More than that, the girl had character and courage. One who chanced to catch the flash of her splendid hazel eyes in certain moments might easily have fancied her capable of even greater bravery than suffering the long silence of the mountains for her father's sake. She was something even more than Tommy knew.

Placer was a very small place, eight miles eastward from the Sandrill bridge, up among the tossing earth waves that weltered toward the high backbone of the Range. Ruth's firm slim fingers had made the interior of the station homelike, from the kitchen to the birdcage above the telegraph table in the bay-window.

Tommy found it an alluring spot to visit; besides, of evenings, the dispatcher's wire, though not a human heartstring, thrilled often electrically between them with that which sprang from chords that were tenderly human. Ruth's father had a gold "prospect" not far from Placer, with which he was entertaining himself at times, finding in it stimulus for certain pleasant dreams; hence, the girl was frequently in entire charge of the station, the duties of which were very light. In the long pauses between the passing of the trains she often went to walk, rambling fearlessly about the mountain side. On one of these walks she saw the "seizor," the first glimpse had of him by anyone since he deigned to devote his energies to the disruption of the road.

A half mile below the station lay a little bridge across a ravine, at the bottom of which a mountain stream, swiftly volant and singing, came out of choking greenery and shot again into greenery. Here Ruth often rested, sitting in a shady spot near the brink of the ravine, and here one sunset hour as she silently mused she spied a horseman riding out of the thicket of verdure below her. He was dressed in clothing of a neutral tint, wore a gray slouch hat and had a drooping black moustache. At one ear he held a contrivance which looked to be a sort of combination of tin-pan and a horn. He seemed to be listening intently through this instrument and his black eyes glanced about with keen alertness beneath the shading brim of his hat. The girl sank back flat upon the earth, her heart leaping. As she lay there she turned her head so that her gaze encompassed the upper portion of the bridge and presently she saw a hand reach up through the ties and place a small bag of something upon one of the rails. After the hand had been withdrawn she lay motionless a long time. Finally, when the smoky dusk was thick, she sat up and looked about. The man had come and gone, so far as she could detect, absolutely without noise. She took the package from the bridge very gingerly and hurried down to the station. Amos Patten soon told her what it was, and ten minutes later, through the wire and Tommy Loomis, we all had heard.

Through the next three days and nights effort and vigilance were doubled. The penitentiary hounds had been brought to Paley Fork several days before, and these creatures of clairvoyant nose were now rushed to the little bridge below Placer. But in vain; some-sort of perfume scattered by the man seemed to sicken and baffle the dogs; to diffuse itself so widely that the beasts were all at sea. However, more feet were now in the mountain roads and trails pushing the quest. Sanborn and "Yellow" Logan and John Loomis, together with over a hundred expert man-catchers from Denver, were in the region, working like beavers with no obvious result save weariness.

However, something of real import had happened, an accident that engendered crisis had fallen. During the night that followed the evening in which Ruth Patten had looked upon the face of the "pestilence," he of the drooping mustache had ridden by devious lifted mountain ways and burrowing avenues toward the west, intent upon still further urging the company to issue its coveted "milk" by breaking the line west of Paley Fork. With his horse proceeding on almost soundless feet, and himself, through the use of his curious audiphone, in instant command of the least noise that fell within the radius of a half mile or more, he rode by at times, out



DRAWN BY EDGAR BERT SMITH

"Expert man catchers from Denver."

of the traveled ways and permitted the searchers to pass him by.

Upon one of these wily discursions, on a mountain side north of Paley Fork, the "seizor's" grand campaign of terror suddenly jolted against discouraging Chance; his horse slipped from a dangerous point, carrying him crashing down a considerable precipice and leaving him with a broken arm, a smashed audiphone and a dead steed. Manifestly he was no longer safely equipped for either self protection or successful furtherance of the raid. Mr.



DRAWN BY EDGAR BERT SMITH

"Leaving him with a broken arm and a dead steed."

Beaumont swiftly conceived a notion for doctors and a deep desire to quit the region.

It would hardly be worth while to state that Mr. Beaumont was a singularly original, dauntless, and resourceful soul; there had been evidence in plenty of this; but he did need a fresh horse, a new audiphone, and splints for his arm. He felt a natural desire to go away before he was captured, since capture meant the

penitentiary or something worse. His procedure was characteristic; he did not do things as did other men.

Very late in the second night after Mr. Beaumont had experienced this private tragedy he brought his bruised person secretly into the Paley Fork yards in quest of exit. Now, upon a spur-track near the round-house stood an ancient engine, the No. 100, bought from the K. P. when the Western Central was under construction. At the time of her purchase she had not been young; now she was hoary, if the term may be permitted, and had either to be largely rebuilt or cast to the scrap pile. Addicks, the master mechanic, decided to send her to the main shops at Denver that she might be "killed or cured," as the superintendent of motive power might will when her case had been diagnosed. Accordingly he ordered Dick to hook her on

to his engine, the 484, and haul her over the Range to the capitol. Dick was now crossing the division every twelve hours, with armed guards, since Phil Porter and the 300 had been blown up, and could as well as not pilot the old 100.

Mr. Beaumont, crouching in shadow between two box cars, chanced to hear the yard foreman explain to a switchman this order from the "M. M." To his penetrative wit the situation made swift appeal.

He crept stealthily to the decrepit engine, which had for weeks known neither fire nor steam, and climbing through the gangway into the tender, painfully and carefully lowered himself through the intake into the water tank. The round aperture through which water was let into the tank closed with an iron lid, hinged on one side, and fastening with a spring snap on the other. Reaching up with the hand of his uninjured arm, after his feet rested on the bottom, Mr. Beaumont softly let down the lid. It closed with a click of the spring catch, and Mr. Beaumont, bringing to bear the wildest possible pressure, could not open it again. He had imprisoned himself!

The "seizor" sat down upon the bottom of the tank in rare perplexity, wondering how he would escape from the place without discovery after his arrival in Denver. It looked that destiny might deliver him into the hands of those who wanted him. However, as respected Mr. Beaumont's resourcefulness, he had reasons for confidence, one item of several that braced him being no less a fact than that he had very ingeniously escaped from the penitentiary two months before. Still, the situation was rather dispiriting, especially to a man who had recently taken charge of, and dominated a railroad. Had Mr. Beaumont known just how he was to find egress from the black and musty hole he would have felt doubtless a still heavier burden of discouragement. As matters stood, one factor, at least, appealed comfortingly to this erstwhile regal highwayman, now ingloriously "bottled up" in the tank: his present lair was quite the last place on earth into which any one would look with thought of finding him.

Just after day had flowered, and it blossomed wonderfully there in the mountains, Edwards backed the 484 down to the inert and silent 100. The rusty drawbar of the latter engine was coupled to the tender of the 484, the drawbar being supplemented by a heavy chain. The low-hung, heavy old creature having thus, metaphorically, a ring in her nose, was led out upon the main line. After two guards with rifles in hands had climbed into the cab with Edwards, the latter opened the throat of 484 and the two en-

gines thumped their way out, through the switches and rolled away toward the Sandrill. Thirty minutes later Nat Peters, with the 505 and a coach in which were Sanborn, Logan, Loomis *père*, and a dozen armed men, followed toward the east.

Their purpose was to conduct a search from the summit down the east side of the Range, Mr. Beaumont seemingly being utterly unfindable on the western slope.

One can scarcely fancy what a stirring of the official pulses would have ensued had they known that the baffling Mr. Beaumont was very much in the immediate procession. As for the "seizor" himself, he crouched on the floor of the tank, holding fast to one of the rods that served to break the sway and push of the water when the machine was going fast and the tank was full. It may reasonably be doubted if, shaken about in that ink-black hole, the conquest of even an American railroad served to make blackmail by dynamite seem to him utterly satisfying.

For the most part, the 484 had only to hold back the 100 on the way from Paley Fork to the Sandrill, the grade being downward. From the Sandrill, beginning to mount the mighty steps that swung upward through thirty miles toward the summit, the old engine dragged on the coupling like a dead leviathan. At Bridge Station tank Edwards stopped the 484 for water. The two guards got down to stretch their legs, and, as the engines were again put in motion, they climbed into the 100. One of the men took the engineer's seat in the cab, the other passed back into the empty tender and perched on the top of the tank. The redoubtable Mr. Beaumont heard the man plunk the butt of the gunstock down between his knees on the iron not thirty inches above the "seizor's" head.

"This is dandy," cried the guard on the tank to the one in the cab, "I can watch both sides of the right-of-way. I feel myself nearing that five thou."

The man spoken to came back and also perched on the tank. "I'll divide the mazuma with you, Jim," he laughed. "This is a good p'int to see from sure. Besides, if Edwards runs the 484 on to a poultice of nitro, laid on the track by that mysterious

son of Satan, we will be some distance from the burst of the pinwheels and fixin's."

Mr. Beaumont, though longing sorely for a mouthful of fresh air and the openness of some far away promontory by the sea threw his curved mustache awry with a sardonic grin.

Morning sunlight was flooding down the west side of the Range when the 484 passed Placer Station. Ruth Patten, in a pretty calico and with a rose in her hair, was out on the platform. Each man on the engines smiled and took off his hat to her. The two on the tank, sitting almost on Mr. Beaumont's head, thrilled with something of the pride of cavaliers, riding, as they were, in search of the mighty mountain brigand. Besides, Ruth's smiling eyes were the only ones that had looked upon the Human Crux, the visage of which behind iron bars was worth \$5,000. They bowed with emphasis to her.

At that moment Nat Peters, with the 505 and the coach of officials and deputies, was rounding Puma Point, coming down toward the Sandrill. Chief Manvell himself was on the East End train-shed at Paley Fork, anxiously watching the movements of the few trains traversing the division. Twenty-two minutes later the operator at Bonebreak, seven miles farther up the Range from Placer, reported engine 484 and 100 as having passed eastward; six minutes later he fairly jumped upon the key and telegraphed Manvell.

"The 100 has broken loose! She just went by here down the grade like a rocket!" he said.

Manvell fell back from the train-sheet and stared at it for an instant as if it were on fire. "My God!" he breathed, then his hand leaped to the key and called Bridge Station.

"Sanborn's special?" the dots and dashes flashed.

"Just gone," came the reply.

"Can you signal them?"

"No, they have crossed the bridge and are out of sight."

Manvell got to his feet holding fast the table. "Burke!" he said hoarsely. The superintendent came out of the alcove

room, his brows knit in anger.

"More dynamite?" he grated; "who's struck it now?"

"Don't know if it's that or not; the 100 is loose and coming down the mountain; she will strike Sanborn and the men just below Placer!"

Bunch Wilson, who was dispatching the West End, and the way operator, came to the chief's table; they had suddenly grown pale. Burke unconsciously ran his sinewy fingers through his hair; both his hands were trembling. Manvell caught the key again and the dots and dashes flew. He was wildly calling Ruth Patten at Placer now; one chance of salvation remained. But Placer was silent, no reply came back. Burke walked up and down, fiercely striking his right fist into his left palm and cursing women as employes, but Wilson and the way man stood staring at the chief; Manvell hung over the zipping key with perspiration dripping from his chin, but Placer made no sound; Ruth Patten was in better business.

Sitting by the telegraph table in the station, sewing and thinking of Tommy, that startling announcement from Bonebreak had roused her suddenly. She, too, like Manvell, had gotten to her feet in consternation. She saw as clearly as he the tragedy that was to fall. For a moment she stared blankly, then her big hazel eyes flamed with light. She sprang out of the little office swiftly, ran into the small freight room and snatched a switch key from the check-rack. The next moment she was on the platform, looking anxiously about her. Amos Patten had gone to his "prospect;" no one was near. On the north side of the station ran a complete siding, upon which stood three box-cars; on the south side, paralleling the main track, stretched a spur, some three hundred feet in length. The switch to this spur lay some two hundred feet eastward from the station. The spur track itself could not well be made a complete siding, for the reason that its western end abutted on air, the earth breaking downward at that point into Placer Canyon.

Should she turn the engine in on the north track or the south? On the north



DRAWN BY EDGAR BERT SMITH

'There's several men in the hospital on your account.' See page 530

the flying mass of iron must burst into the box-cars, on the south it would sweep away the bunting-post and leap down through pine trees and mighty boulders into the gorge below. In either case it looked sorry indeed for the king of railroad wreckers, sealed in the tank of the doomed 100.

The girl chose the spur-track. It seemed better to send the old engine to her final death than to crush good property and endanger the station itself. With parted lips and a heart that throbbed wildly, she fled along the ties to the switch. With shaking fingers she inserted the key in the lock and turned it, listening toward the east. She could hear nothing save the calmer of her pulses. The time seemed year-long in which she was trying to throw the shift-rails over; indeed, she had tugged and thrown herself against the lever of the old-fashioned target switch through quite two minutes before the rails were over and the pin pushed in. Through every snail-paced moment she had seen in horrified fancy the avalanche of iron whirl by and go down to split a bloody way through Sanborn's special.

Now, she stood bending toward the east, wide-eyed and panting, unconsciously wringing her bruised hands together in an agony of expectation. Perhaps the runaway had climbed the rails somewhere and already lay in ruin in some gorge! No! down through the gnarled muscles of the mountain's bosom crept a flooding thunder; it rose and heaved in volume until the air quivered and the ground shook. Involuntarily the girl drew back and still farther back, her slim shape bent forward, her white face straining. With a fearful bursting roar the rushing engine struck the switch, tipped and shot along the spur. Almost opposite the station the engine exploded! A tearing, rending, thunder-burst, and the air was full of dust and hurtling iron. Completely gutted, her twisted frame and gaping boiler rolled and bounded fifty feet away and hung over the edge of the gorge; her tender, crushed and keeling half over, turned straight across the track and plunged through the platform into the bay window of the station.

The girl got up from the ground, where

she had dropped involuntarily or been thrown by concussion, and with no clear sense of what she was about, fled to the station. She ran in through the door of the little passenger room, her thoughts twisting in an inconsequent chaos of Tommy Loomis and the safety of the bird that had hung in the bay window. As she entered the door a man, bloody and disheveled, crept out of the office and got to his feet. Gasping for breath and red-eyed he looked at her. It was Mr. Beaumont. He looked blackened and battered as something might that had been thrown from a catapult. Mad to escape, he fumbled bunglingly at his belt where hung a revolver. The girl had drawn back with a scream of terror. The next moment she whipped a pistol from the pocket of her gown and leveled it. For days she had carried that little instrument for Mr. Beaumont. She stood up so straight she seemed to lean backward and her eye turned to amber fire.

"Drop it! Throw it over there in the corner! I know you!" Her white teeth bit off the words sharp and clean. "That's right, throw it on the floor; I'll take care of it."

The man dropped the revolver on the floor and stood swaying, his red eyes dimming as he stared. "I'm hurt," he breathed; "let me—let me sit down."

The girl's face softened. "Rest here on one of these settees," she said. The man's limbs wavered and doubled and he sank down on one of the seats, his flesh showing chalky through the grime on his face. "Water," he whispered.

The young woman looked at him steadily a moment. "There's several men in the hospital on your account," she said, but she brought some water in a tin cup from a little tank in the corner and held it to his lips. When the man had revived she stepped back and leveled the pistol at his head. "Some one will come soon," she said. "Yes," breathed the other's lips. "Thank you for the water."

When Sanborn's special rolled up to the station they found her standing there, swaying a little but holding the pistol level. President Sanborn himself caught her as she fell.

The 484 came trundling down to Placer a few minutes later. Rounding a sharp curve on a steep grade, the drawbar of the old 100 had pulled out. The sudden wrench had broken the chain and the ancient tub had fled down the mountains. The cavaliers on the tank had quickly abandoned her. But the explosion of the engine—there we encountered a mystery. Old Addicks, "M. M.," and physician of locomotives, offered the most plausible explanation. The throttle of the hoary antique, he said, had jarred loose. Running backward then, the pistons had pumped air into her boiler, compressing it until probably the strain reached five hundred pounds to the square inch. Unable to release the air through her safety valve rapidly enough, the old relic had finally

been rent in twain. We at first fancied that the amazing Mr. Beaumont had somehow blown the engine up, but he refused to add this trifle to his exploits; besides, such a feat on his part had been quite impossible.

As for Tommy Loomis—he surely grew a foot in stature during the following week. Burke himself kissed Ruth when she came over to Paley Fork, and Senator Loomis—well, he said a number of things that turned the girl rosy, among these he stated, with agreeable positiveness and his arm about her, that she must come to Denver with Tommy when he took his new position, that Mrs. Loomis and he would anxiously look for her. They were not disappointed.

From Out of the West

BY ELEANOR H. PORTER

The front door swung open and a small dog bounced out upon the topmost step. A series of short barks, a furiously wagging tail, and four capering feet plainly testified to an overmastering joy almost too large for one small body to hold.

Around the dog's neck was a collar, and to the collar was attached a stout cord, the other end of which disappeared through the half-open door-way. From a chamber window across the street Stanley Kent watched the dog and idly speculated as to just what sort of a hand held the end of that cord.

"It's one of the three," he mused aloud.

"Eh? what?" interposed a peevish voice from the couch behind him. "I do wish, Stanley, you'd quit that absurd habit of yours of breaking out with those irrelevant, idiotic remarks. It's aggravating, mighty aggravating! What's one of three?"

The man at the window laughed with the good nature of one long-practiced in meeting petulant comments.

"It's a mystery, uncle," he explained, "and it's at the end of a string across the street. At one end of the string is an agitated atom in the shape of a dog; conse-

quently, at the other end I fancy there is one of three things: A ten-year-old girl, a beflooned and befurbelowed young woman, or a maiden of uncertain age but certain avoirdupoise, who—well, by Jove!" the words ended in a low whistle.

"Well," prompted the old man from the couch.

There was no answer.

"Well," came the querulous voice again. "Stanley, why don't you tell me?"

Still there was silence.

First one, then the other of the old man's slippered feet slid from the couch to the floor. Slowly, and with infinite pains, the long, lean body came upright and moved in an uncertain, wavering line toward the window.

"Humph!" grunted the old man over his nephew's shoulder. "I thought as much."

Across the street the small dog still barked and danced. He was down on the walk now, and behind him, with slow, careful movements, a young woman was descending the steps. Her gown was of almost Quakerish simplicity, and her hat was guiltless of waving plume or nodding

flower. Her face, pale, and rarely sweet, was upraised, and her eyes seemed to look straight ahead, not down to her hesitating feet. Her left hand, slender and ungloved grasped the dog's leader; her right, tapped the step below with a light cane.

"Blind!" cried Kent. "Who is she? Do you know anything about her? Does she live there?" he asked in quick succession, his pitying eyes still following the girl's movements.

The old man turned and shuffled back to the couch.

"Know anything about her?" Of course I don't," he said testily. "As if I didn't have anything to do but to keep track of strange young women!"

"Well, I haven't!" declared the younger man with sudden vehemence, catching up his hat and hurrying from the room.

Across the street the small dog pranced along the sidewalk as though aware of his high mission. Straight forward, with now and then a turn to avoid a passerby, he led the blind girl's steps until he came to the curbstone that marked the edge of the avenue which crossed the side street at right angles. There he hesitated.

Two automobiles were coming down the avenue. Kent gave an involuntary exclamation and hurried forward. The small dog staid motionless until, with a whiz and a series of toots, the swiftly revolving wheels had passed; then he jumped to the roadway and gave a gentle tug at the cord.

"Coast clear, is it, Watchout?" laughed the girl softly, and yielded herself to the dog's lead.

The avenue was not wide at this point, nor was it frequented by many vehicles. The curious little procession trailed safely across the open space—the dog, the girl, and the man—and entered the gateway to a small park set like an oasis in a desert of brick and brownstone. With the assurance of long habit the dog led his charge straight to the third settee and stopped. Kent, too, stopped a discreet distance away.

"Ah, here we are, Old Faithful!" said the girl aloud, slipping her fingers along the back of the settee. "There, now we'll rest and enjoy the scenery; won't we?" she finished gaily.

For a minute she sat there in silence, her chin uptilted, and her face turned toward the light breeze that came from the west. Five yards away the man stood motionless, forgetful of time, himself, and that his first excuse, a fear for her safety, no longer gave him leave to watch so closely and so persistently this unknown young woman in a public park. A great wrath, unreasoning and overmastering, contracted the muscles of his fingers and made tense the lines around his mouth. He closed his eyes and shuddered; he turned his face, his eyes still closed, from side to side. "Good God, the blackness of it!" he murmured huskily. "And she—she has it always!"

A light laugh came from the settee, and Kent's eyes flew open in amazement.

"Watch, look!" cried the girl. "The tree wants to make my acquaintance. He's reached way down here to shake hands!"

It was a maple leaf that had fallen from the tree to the girl's lap. Her slim fingers patted and smoothed the bit of yellow, then held its cool surface to her cheek.

Scarcely realizing what he was doing, Kent started forward and picked up two or three leaves from the walk. The small dog growled, and Kent came to himself.

What, indeed, had he been intending to do? Present a strange young woman with a bouquet of leaves? To Kent, it seemed at that moment as if the foliage of the entire park were far too small an offering to lay at her feet; and yet—

The small dog growled again, and the girl turned her head and listened. There was a hunted look in her wide-open eyes that made Kent anathematize himself for his thoughtlessness. Very softly he backed away, then turned and hurried from the park.

At the gateway he ran sharply into a boy.

"Well, well, my little man, I beg pardon I'm sure," apologized Kent.

"Don't mention it, sir," piped a high-pitched, cheerful voice. "'Twas kinder s'prisin', though!"

The boy hurried on and Kent looked after him.

A well shaped, well-poised head, a pair of square-cut shoulders, and an air of alert

independence made the little fellow wonderfully attractive. The boy stopped at the third settee and threw his arms around the blind girl's neck.

"Well, by Jove!" ejaculated Kent, turning, and crossing the street.

Stanley Kent had always been "good" to his Uncle Richard, according to the verdict of numerous relatives who acknowledged the patience of the one and the querulousness of the other; but during the next week Stanley's goodness developed and increased to near a state of perfection, if to be "good" were to make visits that were lengthy and frequent.

Even though Stanley's eyes were directed across the street, what mattered it? His ears were attentive to long tales of rheumatism. And even though Stanley's thoughts were all of a girl, a boy, and a small dog, again what mattered it? His tongue was trained to make proper replies at intervals when replies were expected.

Stanley Kent was an artist, and by the end of the week he had decided to paint the girl, the boy, and the small dog. That he was a stranger to all three added only to his scheme. At the end of two weeks he knew that the girl's name was "Dorothy Holbrook," the boy's name, "Robert Holbrook," and the dog's name, "Watchout." He also knew that all three boarded with the widow Carleton who had an extra room to rent on the second floor. The third week saw him well established in Mrs. Carleton's "second floor front," and the end of the fourth week saw the girl, the boy, and the small dog sketched in with a bit of crayon. Not on the same canvas, however; the boy and the dog had one to themselves: the girl graced another, alone.

The sittings were in Mrs. Carleton's back parlor. Perhaps the good woman's heart warmed to Kent's earnest pleadings, or perhaps her pocket-book clamored for the extra five-dollar bill Kent promised to hand over each Saturday night: at all events, her cherished back parlor was cheerfully given up to the artist whenever he wished. Mrs. Carleton herself flitted in and out of the room as often as her conscientious desire to chaperon the young people enabled her to snatch a few

minutes from her breadmaking and dish washing.

And there they sat—the artist and his model; and the model was oftenest the girl. The boy loved his play, and the dog loved his nap on the rug; but the girl—and what a model she made!

At times Kent quite held his breath, so intangible and unreal seemed the loveliness that he was trying to imprison within the four edges of his canvas. At other times the dream-maiden fled, and in her place sat a girl, none the less beautiful, none the less charming, but real and bewitchingly human. It was at such times that Kent and his model talked.

"You're not tired?" he asked one day, after a long silence.

"Not a bit."

"What a concentrated little piece of patience you are! You make a fine model."

She laughed happily.

"Do I? I'm so glad!"

The man caught the new light on her face and warmed to his task.

"You do, surely; and I thought you would. I wanted to paint you the very first minute I saw you!"

"What! when you first came here?"

"Oh, before that," he retorted airily.

"Before that?" There was a queer something in her voice which Kent could not understand.

"Surely," he rejoined; "I saw you in the park. You went there with Watchout."

She stirred uneasily.

"Yes, I—I go there often," she murmured; then quickly, "Isn't the park beautiful? I love the big trees and the shady walks. And isn't the tiny little pond pretty? Have you seen the view from the tower? You can see away out into the country."

The brush in Kent's fingers moved more and more slowly, then stopped altogether. Kent's hand dropped limp to his knee, and his eyes stared straight ahead.

"'Away out into the country,'" he echoed, half under his breath.

"Yes. Have you seen it?"

Kent pulled himself together with a start.

"No, but I'd like to," he said softly. "Perhaps you'll take me; will you?" He

had hesitated. To him the words seemed a cruel mockery; but the quick joy that flamed into the girl's face told him that he had made no mistake.

He was sure now of what before he had only guessed. To Dorothy, the one unpardonable sin was a word or act which made concession to the fact that she was not like other girls; and the one sure road to her heart led through natural, everyday ways that ignored her loss of sight.

It was wonderful to see how quickly her slim, swift-moving fingers would comprehend the size and shape of something new to them, and how hungrily her ears would drink in any stray bit of information regarding it, provided, always, that she had to ask no questions herself; and it was pitiful, later, to hear her eager story of the "lovely red rose," the "dear little white kitten with the black star on his forehead," or of Mrs. Carleton's "new black dress which was so becoming."

Weeks passed and the picture of the girl approached completion. It was then that a curious restlessness seized Kent's model which baffled his every effort to fathom. Not until he found her one day standing before the picture, her hands outstretched, and her fingers dabbing at the paint to see if it were dry, did he think he had found a possible solution. He acted on his idea at once.

"Pretty close to being done, isn't it, Miss Holbrook?"

"It looks like it."

Kent started. Even now he was not quite used to her way of putting things.

"I hope you'll like it all right," he resumed with an effort. "I'm mighty proud of the way I've caught the light on your face; and that costume with its long lines and flowing draperies has proved so becoming that I know you'll feel paid for your trouble in getting into it every day or two."

"Of course I shall!" she laughed.

"Your chin is at just the right tilt," he went on lightly, "and your nose; oh, I've given you a fine nose, Miss Holbrook."

The girl grew suddenly white and took one step toward him.

"And my eyes, Mr. Kent? Where am I looking?"

The man caught his breath sharply.

"Your eyes?" he faltered, his own eyes dropping to a penciled line at the bottom of the canvas, a line which told the name of the picture and which would later appear on its frame. The line contained four words and read: "The Blind Girl, Nydia."

"Yes, am I looking up or down?" Her voice shook and was almost inaudible, so seldom was it used for questions like this.

There was no answer. Kent could not speak.

"You—you don't tell me," she began again; then, with a sharp cry, she sprang to his side and caught his arm in her two hands. "Oh, you haven't made me blind!"

Beneath her touch the strength of the man fled. For an instant he covered her trembling hands with a warm palm; his lips parted and murmured broken, incoherent words; then a cry that was almost a sob shook his whole frame and forced the girl herself to turn comforter.

It was different after that. The girl talked at times of her two years' blindness, and even yielded to Trent's earnest entreaties and allowed her eyes to be examined by a famous oculist. The great man's verdict, that a certain course of treatment together with an operation might possibly restore the sight, was received by Kent with triumphant joy.

"There, now, I fancy things are coming out all right," he finished, after a lengthy telling of what the doctor had said.

Miss Holbrook shook her head.

"Thank you; but all that is quite impossible."

"Impossible!"

"Yes, it's too expensive." There was a look on the girl's face Kent had never seen there before.

"Confound the expense!" he began, then stopped shamefacedly. "I beg your pardon, I'm sure," he apologized in quick contrition. "But, in such a case, expense surely doesn't count!"

"But it has to with me," she laughed. "I really haven't the money." She paused, then went on with heightened color. "Since you are so good, I will tell you how it is. I have only an annuity. It is not large, but with careful managing Robert

and I do very nicely. I even lay by a little some months, for the proverbial rainy day; but, as for anything beyond that, surely you see how impossible it is!"

"But isn't there somebody, something, some relative?"

"Not a soul."

"Some uncle, or cousin, or great-grandfather with a superfluous amount of money that he doesn't know how to spend?" persisted Kent.

The girl shook her head, but the small boy, who was near, laughed aloud.

"Oh, Dot," he chuckled, "Mr. Kent means Uncle Jed—I know he means Uncle Jed out in Denver."

"Hush, Bobby, hush!" she remonstrated.

"Of course I mean Uncle Jed," declared Kent, stoutly. "We'll write to Uncle Jed."

"No, no!" cried the girl in quick alarm.

"It would be useless, quite useless. I forbid you to do such a thing!"

For some days the battle raged. To all suggestions the girl turned an ear made deaf by pride and sensitiveness. There was nothing, no one, she insisted. Once Kent swore he would take the whole expense on himself. Only once did he suggest it, however. The look on the girl's face kept him, thereafter, silent on at least one way out of the difficulty.

It was in the height of the controversy that "Uncle Jed" made a hurried trip East, and called on his niece. Kent, unaware of the man's presence, did not see him; but he heard of it afterwards, and it was the visit that gave him his idea. Calling Robert into his room, he carefully closed the door.

"My boy," he began warily, "you and I have got a job on our hands."

"Yes, sir,"

"Your sister can be helped, and she must be, that's all."

"Yes, sir," said the boy again.

"Now, listen," resumed Kent; "your Uncle Jed has been here. He has had a splendid chance to find out all about your sister's eyes. Well, it has occurred to me that by this time he must be very anxious to do something. Rather than to take any chances on the matter, however, I

have written his letter myself. Understand?"

The boy's eyes had been growing big and round. Now a far-away twinkle looked out from their blue depths.

"This letter," continued Kent, "inclosed in this envelope, which, as you see, bears your sister's name, will be sent to a friend of mine in Denver. He will mail it from there. When this letter comes to your sister, therefore, just tell her she's got a letter from Denver, and then read the letter!"

The small boy danced around the room.

"I'll do it! I'll do it!" he cried; "and say, you are a brick!"

Kent's long-slumbering conscience suddenly asserted itself.

"Now, have a care," cautioned the man. "Be sure you tell the truth, Robert. You are not to say the letter is from your uncle, you understand. It is from Denver; that is all." Then he finished impressively, "A lie, Robert, is a very bad thing, a very bad thing."

"Yes, sir," said Robert, demurely, and danced sideways out of the room. Ever afterwards Kent wondered if Robert did give his left eyelid a flippant little wink as he went through the chamber door.

Some days later Miss Holbrook had wonderful news to tell.

"Only think, Mr. Kent," she began excitedly, "we have heard from our uncle out west. He enclosed a check, oh, such a big check, and asked me as a special favor to have a good oculist look at my eyes and see if something could not be done about them. He said he'd been thinking about it ever since he went home. Wasn't it lovely of him?"

"Very lovely," agreed Kent, frowning at Robert who was giggling in the corner.

The giggle and a sudden thought brought the girl to her feet.

"Mr. Kent, you—you didn't ask him to do it?"

"I? Of course not! I never saw him at all," declared the man, hotly. Again he wondered if he caught the flippant wink of a left eyelid from the direction of the small grinning boy.

The treatment began at once, the blind girl going to the doctor's private hospital.

The day before she went, however, she asked Robert to write a letter for her to Denver. In sheer desperation the boy made a flimsy excuse and fled to his colleague for aid. Kent responded at once and walked into the back parlor where Miss Holbrook sat waiting.

"Suppose I write the letter," he suggested. "It's almost school time, you know."

"Thank you; if—if you will. I shouldn't let you do it," she added quickly "only as I go to-morrow, it must be written to-night."

With a grave face and steady hand Kent thanked the generous uncle for his generous gift, and told him of the doctor's hopes of ultimate success. He enclosed the missive in its envelopes, sealed it, directed it, and carried it up stairs, there to lay it away with a haste whose every movement spelled guilt.

The weeks that followed were anxious ones. The operation itself was successfully performed. Then came long days of a silent, darkened room. After a time Kent and Robert were admitted for fifteen-minute visits which were gradually increased to those of an hour. Sometimes there'd be a letter from Denver to read, a letter which necessitated a speedy return of thanks for the bank check that never failed to come. Sometimes a rare rose or a fragrant pink found its way into Dorothy's fingers. Always there was something; and to Dorothy these visits came to be the happiest hours of the day.

It was almost time for the final bandage to be taken from Dorothy's eyes when Kent was called out of the city for four days. On his return, Robert, white-faced and woeful-eyed, met him him at the house door.

"Why, Robert!"

"Oh! Oh, something awful has happened, Mr. Kent!"

The man clutched the boy's arm.

"Awful! What is it? quick!" he gasped.

"Oh—I—I can't," wailed Robert.

Kent paled, and tightened his grasp on the boy's arm.

"Your sister, she—"

"Yes, it—it's about h—her," chattered the boy, vainly trying to free his arm from the vise-like grip.

"Robert, you must tell me quick! You're killing me!" cried Kent hoarsely.

"It—it's Uncle Jed. He's come East. He's down there to the doctor's. I couldn't keep him!" blurted Robert in one long breath of misery.

For a moment Kent stared, open-mouthed, at the whimpering boy; then he released his hold and fell weakly back against the door casing. The next minute his laugh, long, and unrestrained, echoed through the hall.

"And ain't it—bad?" demanded the boy in amazement.

Kent sobered instantly.

"It is bad, maybe, Bobby, there's no telling; still, it might be worse. Anyhow," he added, after a long pause, "she can't undo what's done, if she wants to, eh?"

Kent was not present to welcome Dorothy home. He waited until all suspense was over, the last bandage off, and her restored sight a fact; then he wrote her a note and sent it down stairs by Robert.

The note was unsigned but it brought to its writer an answer in a wonderfully short time; an answer that was received from Robert's hand, not from Robert's lips. Kent tore open the envelope in feverish haste. In the middle of a sheet of paper were these words:

"Will 'Our Uncle from the West' please come down?"

Parisian Modes

MAISON BECHOFF-DAVID—Evening dress of cream satin, trimmed with silver beading, garlands of roses of rose-colored satin, and Alençon lace.

PHOTOGRAPH BY REUTLINGER, PARIS



PHOTOGRAPH BY REUTLINGER, PARIS

MAISON DRÉCOLL—Evening gown of black mousseline de soie, made empire, and trimmed with Irish lace, bows of velvet, and flowers.

MAISON BÉCHOFF-DAVID—Cloak of
Sable, collar and cuffs of Irish lace.

PHOTOGRAPH BY REUTLINGER, PARIS



PHOTOGRAPH BY REUTLINGER, PARIS

MAISON BÉCHOFF-DAVID—Evening
wrap of rose-colored satin, trimmed with
mousseline de soie and marten.

MAISON DRÉCOLL—Gown of black mousseline de soie with velvet appliquees. Stole and muff of cerise satin, trimmed with lace and marten.

PHOTOGRAPH BY REUTLINGER, PARIS



PHOTOGRAPH BY REUTLINGER, PARIS

MAISON REDFERN—Afternoon gown of copper-colored broadcloth, made empire, trimmed with velvet, and large steel buckle.

MAISON DRECOLL—Jacket of American marten, trimmed with jet decorations, collar of velvet with lace ruching.

PHOTOGRAPH BY REUTLINGER PARIS



PHOTOGRAPH BY REUTLINGER, PARIS

MAISON WALLES—Calling gown of almond green broadcloth, made princess, corsage and petticoat of darker green velvet, heavily embossed, large steel buttons.



PHOTOGRAPH BY WHITE, NEW YORK

A Scene from "The Lion and the Mouse."

Some Dramas of the Day

BY ACTON DAVIES

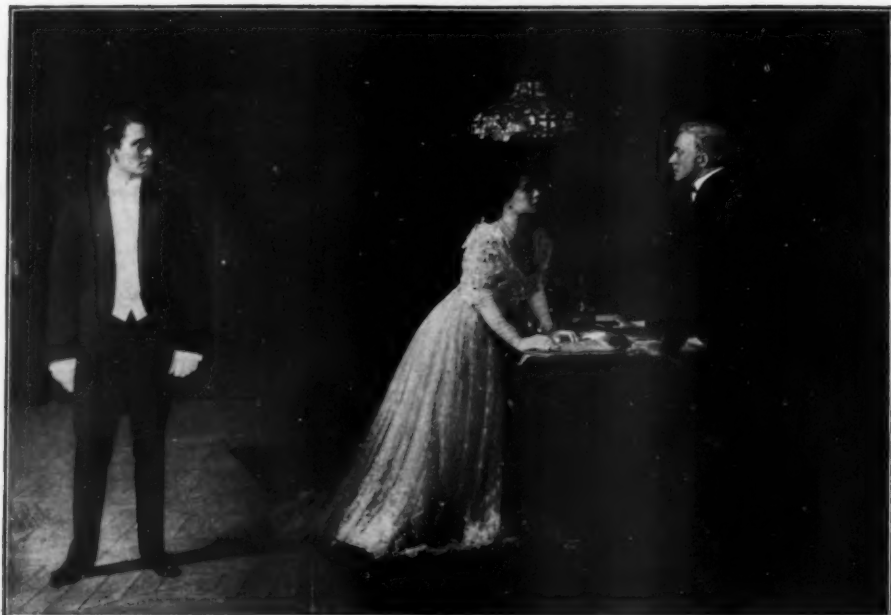
If the stage spectacles at the Hippodrome continue to develop in magnificence at their present rate, there will be nothing for Young America to do but to have three or four new eyes set in his head. It is simply impossible for him to take in all the glories of "A Society Circus" with a single pair of eyes. Before such a spectacle as the Hippodrome offers in "A Society Circus," a critic might just as well throw up his hands. No stage in the world has ever offered so superb a spectacle or so brilliantly executed a pageant. It marks the uttermost limit of what a stage can offer. Fortunately for the children, in all this splendor the funny end of the situation has been well taken care of. Marceline, the imported clown, now has a rival in Slivers, and the burlesque trained animal ballet is as funny as anything which has ever been shown in an English pantomime.

The great trouble with such a spectacle as this is that it kills all competition in its own particular line, for New York at all events. Already two of the big spectacular productions of the season have been obliged to close, owing to the fact that the Hippodrome's performances have utterly outdistanced them. Nothing cloys quicker on an audience



PHOTOGRAPH BY BYRON, NEW YORK

A Scene from "Monna Vanna."



PHOTOGRAPH BY WHITE, NEW YORK

Scene from "The Lion and the Mouse."

than spectacle alone, and these two productions, in attempting to rival the Hippodrome's pageants, omitted humor entirely from their bill of fare.

The situation of "A Society Circus" is as simple as a Mother Goose ballad. Lady Volumina, a rich American mil-

lionairess,—how she gets her title is not explained,—is tired of life, so goes to a gypsy encampment to have her fortune told. There she meets a stranded circus acrobat, falls in love with him, and, in order to save herself from *ennui* and put some honest money in his pocket, she gives him *carte blanche* to arrange a circus for her at her country home. At the commencement of the circus the story goes into limbo and remains there until the final curtain, and everybody is happily mated in the transformation scene.

The only person who is not delighted at the Hippodrome's new spectacle is Mlle. Claire Heliot, the lion tamer, whose lions, twenty-seven in number, play a very important and serious part in the early portion of the show. Later in the ballet these noble beasts are burlesqued cruelly by a company of clowns, who go through all the gestures, antics and impossible feats



PHOTOGRAPH BY HALLEN, NEW YORK

A scene from "Before and After."

which the originals have performed earlier in the evening. The result is a gorgeous laugh for the audience. But this interpolated act has hurt Mlle. Heliot's feelings so much that she and her four-legged stock company have threatened to withdraw from the bill. Nothing short of a large raise in salary, she declares, will induce her to remain;—however, the management is not worrying about that.

It was only a question of time when frenzied finance would reach the stage. The wonder is that it has not got there before, but now, since the success of Charles Klein's play, "The Lion and the Mouse," we may expect an outbreak of financial plays in all parts of the country.

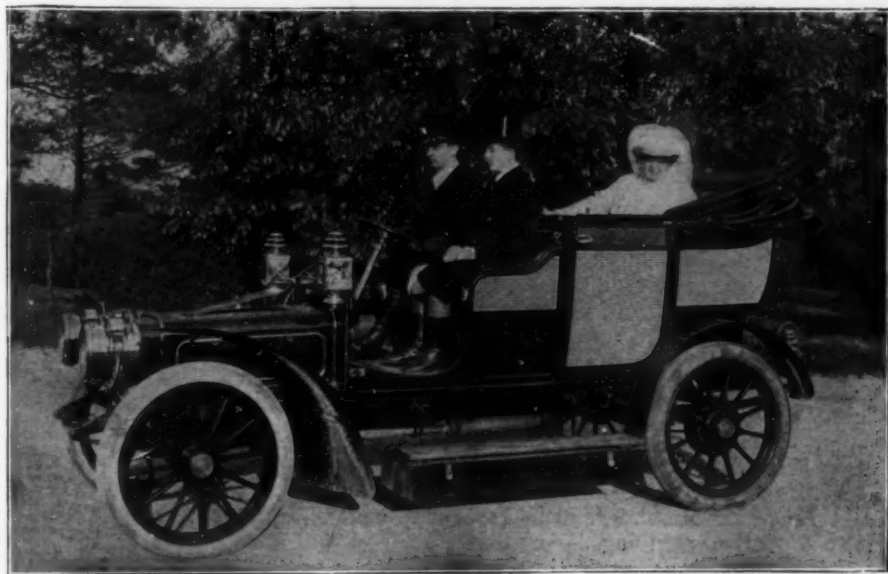
Mr. Klein's play has such a splendid theme that it is almost a pity that he has not spent more time on his play and developed its characters more thoroughly. The dialogue and comedy scenes are ridiculously weak, but the characters of the two principals, the bloated bondholder, *John Burkett Ryder*, and the girl who outwits him, *Shirley Rossmore*, are admirably drawn, and the scenes in



PHOTOGRAPH BY SARONY, NEW YORK

William Faversham.

which these two figure, have made the success of the play. It might have been,



PHOTOGRAPH BY LAZARNICK, NEW YORK

Mrs. Leslie Carter in her new motor car.



PHOTOGRAPH BY WHITE, NEW YORK

Richard Bennett and Grace Elliston in "The Lion and the Mouse."

with such a theme, a great play; as it is, it is merely a strong but thoroughly impossible melodrama.

Shirley Rossmore returns from England to find her father, the well-known judge, a ruined man. *John Burkett Ryder*, who seems to carry the United States Senate in the palm of his hand, has ruined him utterly, and in addition to getting all his money has put a blot on his good name. Going home on the steamer, *Shirley* has met *Ryder's* son, and as is always to be expected in a play of this kind, of course the two youngsters have fallen in love with each other. The moment that she hears of her father's plight, *Shirley* takes a great vow of vengeance. She goes into seclusion for four weeks, and at the end of that time she has finished what promises to be the Great American Novel. Although she has not written anything before, she has not the slightest difficulty in securing a publisher. The book appears, creates a sensation at once, and the

villain of the book is instantly recognized by everyone as a truthful pen picture of *John Burkett Ryder*.

Ryder himself recognizes this portraiture, and he sends for the authoress. *Shirley* has published the book under the *nom de plume* of *Mary Green*. In answer to his invitation, *Miss Green* beards the plutocrat in his den. He strives to tame her, to make her eat out of his hand, as it were, but the girl is too clever for him. She refuses to be awed by either his money or his personality. The old man, furious in failing to score an effect, takes a great fancy to her, hands her a number of papers and letters, and gives her an order to write his biography. She accepts the commission and discovers among the manuscript the letter which proves her father's innocence of the judicial crime of which he has been accused. The old man, growing confidential, tells her that his son has got himself engaged to a girl named *Shirley Rossmore*, the daughter of his bitterest



PHOTOGRAPH BY WHITE, NEW YORK

Scene from "The Lion and the Mouse."



PHOTOGRAPH BY HALLEN, NEW YORK

Scene from "Before and After."

foe. He likes *Miss Green* so much, he says, that he wishes she would go in and win him away from the other girl. The novelty of the situation appeals to *Shirley's* sense of humor, and she says that she will do her best. In the meantime she forwards the incriminating letter to Washington, where, in due course, it clears her father's name.

Meanwhile, the *Ryders*, father and son have been at it hammer and tongs. The boy is disinherited, and then, at the end of the third act, *Shirley* faces the plutocrat once more and denounces him, disclosing to him for the first time the fact that she is not only *Mary Green* but *Shirley Rossmore*. The old man orders her out of his house, but as it is very late at night, *Shirley* refuses to go before the next morning. She has to do this, because otherwise there could not possibly be a fourth act. While she is eating her breakfast, the next morning, old *Ryder* comes to her and begs her pardon. She

tells him that though she loves his son, she cannot possibly unite herself with such a notorious family. This makes the old man more humble. He simply wallows in self-abnegation, and finally, when he agrees to make public a statement clearing her father's name, *Shirley* capitulates.

Miss Grace Elliston makes *Shirley* a very pretty girl, and plays the role



PHOTOGRAPH BY HALLEN, NEW YORK

Scene from "Before and After."



PHOTOGRAPH BY HALL, NEW YORK

E. H. Sothern as *Petruchio*.

with considerable power, but it is the character of old *Ryder*, as played by Edmund Breese, which really makes the play. It is an exceptionally fine piece of characterization.

At the Manhattan, in Leo Ditrichstein's adaptation from the French, "Before and After," they are trying the experiment of seeing whether the public still has any desire for French farce of the old school. It is four or five years since a play of this particular sort has been acted in New York, and evidently there is some desire on the public's part for this form of entertainment, for "Before and After" has been doing extremely well, thanks to the work of a capital cast, which includes Fritz Williams, Katherine Florence, Georgia Lawrence, and Mr. Ditrichstein himself.

A patent medicine is the

star of the play. It is a powder which begins to work its effects the moment it is swallowed, and one of its specialties is to make old gentlemen of crabbed dispositions genial, light-hearted and distinctly amorous. A New York doctor of the highest respectability,—he must be respectable, of course, because his office is directly opposite the Waldorf-Astoria,—partakes of one of these powders unknown to himself, and upon being called across the street to the big hotel to administer sedatives to a French lady in hysterics, he kisses her by mistake. The bell-boy, who oversees the incident, runs and tells her French husband. The husband immediately beards the doctor in the consulting room, and threatens to shoot him on the spot unless he allows him the privilege of kissing his wife in a similar manner. That starts the ball of complication rolling, and, when it is stated that the next act is laid in a big hotel at Saratoga, anyone who has ever seen a French farce will be able to guess most of the complications two or three minutes before they set in. The doctor refuses to allow his wife to suffer such an indignity, sends her off to the Hot Springs, and has hired a wife for this special occasion. The Frenchman calls with his pistol, and the *pseudo* wife, according to agreement, for which she is being very well paid, is about to submit to the inevitable kiss, when the real wife suddenly appears. The situation becomes



PHOTOGRAPH BY BYRON, NEW YORK

Scene from "*Monna Vanna*."

very strained in all quarters, but is finally solved by the young man who is the agent for the powder surreptitiously administering one to the irate Frenchman and another to the real wife. The result is that the play ends in a burst of laughter all around.

On quite another tack is "The Labyrinth," the drama by Hervieu, which Miss Olga Nethersole has been presenting at the Herald Square with rather indifferent success. This is a problem play, with divorce as its theme. A young wife has divorced her husband for very good cause, and when the play opens she is



PHOTOGRAPH BY HALLEN, NEW YORK

Miss Katherine Florence.

about to marry another man. After her marriage, the first husband hears that his successor is bringing up his six-year old child in a way of which he does not approve. He goes to his first wife and demands that the child shall be sent to him for a certain time each year. The wife agrees. In the third act the child has been taken ill and the mother has gone to nurse him at the first husband's home. She finds the child better, but it



PHOTOGRAPH BY SARONY, NEW YORK

Miss Virginia Harned.

is so late that she is obliged to pass the night in her old home. The first hus-



PHOTOGRAPH BY HALLEN, NEW YORK

Fritz Williams.



PHOTOGRAPH BY HALLEN, NEW YORK

Scene from "Before and After."

band comes into her room. She begins to reproach him for his inconstancy, and finally tells him that, though she respects her new husband, she can never drive the memory of the father of her child out of her heart. The act ends with the woman once more in her first husband's arms.

The following morning, she returns and tells her mother, a very strict and devout Roman Catholic, what has occurred. The mother, who has never approved of her second marriage, says: "That was no sin which you committed last night; he is your husband; you have been living in adultery with the other man for the last two years." Repulsed by her mother the woman confesses to her husband. He and the first husband then meet by chance; a quarrel ensues, and they both fall over a cliff, leaving the woman, doubly husbandless, declaring that henceforth she will live for her child alone.

The chief honors of this performance went to Hamilton Ravelle, who gave an uncommonly strong impersonation of the first husband. Miss Nethersole was admirable in her strong scenes, but it is not a part which suits either her tempera-

ment or method. She has since been seen to much more advantage in revivals of "Carmen," "Sapho," and "The Second Mrs. Tancred."

Miss Virginia Harned's new play by Pierre Berton, "La Belle Marseillaise," was produced at the Knickerbocker, but although Miss Harned scored a great personal success in the character of the heroine, the play itself failed to touch the public interest. It had some strong scenes, and with better stage management could easily have been made into a big popular success; but M. Berton, who superintended the rehearsals himself, absolutely refused to allow any changes to be made in the manuscript and, in consequence, what might have been a very profitable property has now

been sent to the storehouse. Napoleon figured very largely in the plot of this play, and for some time to come it is more than probable that managers will fight shy of Napoleonic plays. There seems to be a hoodoo on them all.



PHOTOGRAPH BY BYRON, NEW YORK

Closing Scene of "The Girl of the Golden West."